

# The Montague Reporter

YEAR 18 – NO. 34

also serving Irving, Gill, Leverett and Wendell

\$1

EDITOR@MONTAGUEREPORTER.ORG

THE VOICE OF THE VILLAGES

JUNE 25, 2020

## MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD Town Hall Will Reopen On Thursday

By JEFF SINGLETON

Montague town hall will begin a “controlled reopening” this Thursday, with limited hours and limited access, town administrator Steve Ellis told the Montague selectboard at its June 23 meeting. The senior center on Fifth Street in Turners Falls will remain closed for the “foreseeable future,” he said, although the Council on Aging will continue to provide services to seniors on an outreach basis.

Ellis also reported that a plan to form a committee to study police department policies, a response to recent Black Lives Matter protests, will be presented to the board on Monday, June 29.

The meeting began with a report from town clerk Deb Bourbeau on the recent town election, which she said saw an unusually high turnout. The board also reorganized itself after the election, as is the common practice, into the same configuration as before the election: Rich Kukiewicz as chair, Michael Nelson as vice chair, and Chris Boutwell as clerk.

Ellis reviewed what he called “Phase 2.2” of the state reopening plan, which includes allowing indoor restaurant service “with certain limitations.” Ellis told the *Reporter* that some restaurants may feel they cannot open immediately given the ongoing risks and state restrictions, see MONTAGUE page A7

## G-M SCHOOL COMMITTEE Safety Rules, Budget for Fall Remain Unclear

By MIKE JACKSON

**GILL-MONTAGUE** – The regional school committee met Tuesday night via Zoom for its annual reorganizational meeting, but combined it with a regular business meeting, too, times being what they are.

Gill’s Bill Tomb and Montague’s Cassie Damkoehler won reelection, but Thomasina Hall opted to step off the committee, and was replaced this week by Carleigh Dlugosz, a district parent, alumna, and local business owner.

Mike Langknecht, Heather Katsoulis, and Jane Oakes were all nominated to serve as chair.

“I don’t think I could commit to the time, to be honest,” Katsoulis said, and Langnecht cited the “same reasons” as her, leaving Jane Oakes to continue on as chair for another year. Damkoehler was elected vice chair, and Jen Lively the committee secretary.

It was superintendent Michael Sullivan’s last meeting, and his successor, Brian Beck, sat in.

“It’s been an honor to serve the district,” Sullivan said. “It’s been a lot of hard work, but you’re in really good hands.” Committee see GMRSD page A8

## Have You Been Experiencing Abnormally Dry Conditions?



At Uppinngil Farm in Gill, an unusually dry June has been welcomed.

By SAMANTHA WOOD

**FRANKLIN COUNTY** – Parched. Thirsty. Arid.

It has been hot and dry for weeks. Grass is turning brown, and choosing what to water can feel a bit like triage.

The Turners Falls Water District is asking residents to observe voluntary water restrictions. “Our water supply shows no imminent sign of being at risk,” wrote clerk/

collector Suzanne Leh in a recent press release. “We will continue to monitor water levels and will advise if further conservation measures are needed.”

Jeff Suprenant, chairman of the Riverside water district in Gill, said his lawn is getting brown, but “we haven’t restricted” water usage.

Suprenant explained that sewer bills are costly in the district, which serves 120 residents, and see DRY page A5

GILL SELECTBOARD

## Gill Preps Monthly Budgets; Still No Town Meeting Date

By GEORGE BRACE

In the absence of a town-meeting approved yearly budget for FY’21 beginning on July 1, the Gill selectboard approved a “1/12” budget for the month of July at their June 22 selectboard meeting, held by conference call. There was no news about when the annual town meeting would take place, with the last word coming at the previous meeting that it would likely be held in “late July, at the earliest.”

The board also approved its annual reorganization, and a slate of candidates for town positions, and announced that trash day would be moving from Friday to Thursday as of July 2. The town’s emergency response team did not hold a conference call this week, but members of the team reported no changes in the town’s COVID-19 status.

Towns may approve a month-by-month budget under the state of emergency declared in response to the COVID-19 virus. Town administrator Ray Purington reported that creating such a budget was not as simple as taking last year’s budget and dividing by 12 due to

payments coming due at different times, and the town choosing to pay some bills faster than others to capture discounts, among other reasons. The monthly budget must also be reviewed and approved by the state Department of Revenue (MassDOR).

Finance committee chair Claire Chang commented that in anticipation of coming cuts, town departments should look at 5 to 10% reductions for the yearly budget, and that she felt that dealing with the fallout from COVID-19 would be a year-long process.

The board approved a request to MassDOR for up to \$16,000 in COVID-related deficit spending for FY’20. Purington said he does not expect the town to end up with a deficit of more than \$10,000, but \$16,000 was in line with the town’s federal CARES Act request.

Purington said for the most part, the town hasn’t done any deficit spending, except for police between March and June 30. Most of the departments, he said, had the money in their budgets to cover COVID-related costs, and it was see GILL page A4

## Mike Nelson Keeps Seat With 64% Write-in Vote

By MIKE JACKSON

**MONTAGUE and GILL** – Monday’s town elections were unusual, not simply because of the high rate of mail-in voting – due to coronavirus concerns – but also due to the high number of write-in voting in Montague, which spilled over to the Gill-Montague school committee election.

Michael Nelson, the seven-year incumbent Montague selectboard member who has been working overtime this spring for the state Department of Health and neglectfully did not turn in papers to hold his seat, bounced back with a stunning 706 write-in votes to defeat downtown restaurant owner Ashley Arthur, who won 394.

see ELECTION page A5



Nelson, pictured at town meeting.

## Leverett Town Meeting Spends Money, Carefully

By JERRI HIGGINS

Leverett’s annual town meeting, held outdoors on a bright, hot day last Saturday, was relatively swift, approving a \$6,261,432 budget for FY’21 among the 34 warrant articles on the day’s agenda.

Two articles dealing with the Teawaddle Hill neighborhood created a bit of contention between town moderator Larry Farber and members of the Citizens of Leverett for Environmental Action Now!, whose amendment on an article concerning a well-exploration study was refused due to procedural constraints.

Measures were taken to minimize possible transmission of COVID-19. Along with socially-distant seating on the Leverett Elementary School lawn, single-use plastic bags were used as microphone covers, and there were special procedures for restroom use. A sign-in sheet was required of all present as a contact-tracing measure.

“We are going to do a number of things slightly different this year,” said Farber. “We are going to streamline this.”

After thanking the school for the meeting space, and the police, fire, see LEVERETT page A4



Chairs were spaced out on the Leverett Elementary lawn.

## Petitions Call To Change, Or Retain, “Turners Falls”

By MIKE JACKSON

**MONTAGUE** – Town officials were presented on Wednesday with a petition, gathered on the online platform *change.org*, titled “Rename Turner’s Falls to Great Falls: stop honoring the slaughter of Nipmucs.”

“I know that this has been an issue that residents have brought up for a long time, particularly folks who do belong to Indigenous groups, and that request has not been taken seriously,” Knox Huppert, a white Turners Falls resident who started the petition last week, told the *Reporter*. “But I know that many people now just use ‘Great Falls’ colloquially, anyway.”

Huppert, a children’s therapist, said they “have lived between Greenfield and Montague for about five years.” They said they were not

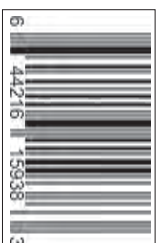
sure how the town would legally change the name of a village, but they “imagine there would have to be some sort of voting procedure.”

Turners Falls, now considered one of Montague’s five villages and home to a majority of its residents, was named in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in honor of Captain William Turner, who led a dawn attack on a village on the opposite side of the Connecticut River on May 19, 1676 during King Philip’s War. Hundreds of non-combatants were massacred; Turner and a number of his company were killed in retreat from a counter-attack.

“People feel uncomfortable with having this legacy follow us, and having that really not be very much acknowledged anywhere in our town,” Huppert said. “I felt that this particular moment, where racial see PETITIONS page A2

### Continual Streaming Content

Illustration.....A2	Plant-Based Diabetes Treatment.....B1
Letters to the Editors.....A2-A3	Recycling Guide.....B2
Local Briefs.....A3	Two Book Reviews.....B2, B5
Full Page Water Quality Ad.....A6	Montague Police Log.....B3
Erving Selectboard Notes.....A7	Monty/Musik/Mountain.....B5
10 Years Ago This Week.....A7	June Poetry Page.....B6
West Along the River: Turtle Island.....B1	Five Comics and a Puzzle.....B7
The Gardener’s Companion.....B1	Great Falls Apple Column.....B8





# The Montague Reporter

"The Voice of the Villages"

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About Face Computing

## Founded by

Arthur Evans Harry Brandt David Detmold  
August 2002

## PETITIONS from page A1

justice and equity is in the forefront of people's minds, is an opportune moment to finally accomplish something."

Huppert said they had planned to deliver the petition to Montague officials – town administrator Steve Ellis, the historical commission, and the cultural council – once 1,000 signatures had been gathered. This occurred on Wednesday, though *change.org* automatically reset the petition's goal to 1,500 when the threshold had been reached. Some signatories are local; others from around the country.

The petition also includes a link to a 2015 statement on the massacre compiled by the Chaubunagungamaug Nipmuck Historic Preservation Office, part of a "pre-inventory" for an ongoing study funded by the National Park Service's Battlefield Protection Program.

Representatives of Narragansett, Wampanoag, and Mohican groups are also participants in that study, as well as the towns of Montague, Greenfield, Gill, Northfield, and Deerfield. (The surviving Pocumtuck people who called this region home largely fled following the war, eventually affiliating with other cultures, including the nearby Abenaki.)

Huppert said the petition was not started in consultation with representatives of any tribal group, but that the Indigenous people they know tend to use "Great Falls," and that "a lot of newer residents, in particular," are drawn to the name.

"It removes the onus of it belonging to us, or to Turner, or to anyone else," they said, "and refocuses on what this village was really founded on, which was the river and the Falls."

On Saturday, Denise Milkey of Montague City, a longtime resident of the town, started a separate petition on *change.org* titled "Retain the name Turners Falls."

"This petition is for the purposes of comparison and to have a base for discussion as to what most citizens would like to see happen with this subject," Milkey's petition, addressed to the Montague selectboard, explains. As of press time, 592 people had signed it.

Reached for an interview, Milkey reiterated that her petition was "a tool to gauge people's opinion," and pointed the *Reporter* toward a statement she had written.

"I am interested to know what all the people think, not just the ones who have signed a 'change the name' petition," she wrote. "In the interest of fair representation and my own curiosity, I have started an alternate petition – not so much to debate the subject, but to see actual

numbers, and give whomever gets this debate thrown at them some figures to refer to."

Milkey also observed that *change.org* does not make it easy to break down signatories by location.

Huppert said they were not involved in the 2016-17 campaign to rename the Turners Falls High School Indians sports teams and change the school logo, as they were living in Northampton at the time.

"A lot of newer residents, in particular, are really drawn toward using 'Great Falls,'" they told the *Reporter*. "Some older town residents, and folks who are just more conservative in general, feel that 'Turners Falls' is a perfectly fine name and that we shouldn't change it now."

After the Gill-Montague school committee voted 6-3 to retire the "Indians" name and logo in February 2017, the town of Montague held a non-binding referendum on the issue; 1,233 of 1,903 ballots cast supported retaining the logo.

"Personally, it has not been at the top of my list right away," said David Brule, when reached for comment on Wednesday. "It's breaking news to me."

Brule, who is white, is the president of the Nolumbeka Project, a nonprofit that promotes education about the region's Native history; a Montague historical commissioner; project coordinator for the Battlefield Grant Advisory Committee; and a graduate of Turners Falls High School. (Mr. Brule is also a regular volunteer columnist at the *Montague Reporter*, and serves on its board of directors.)

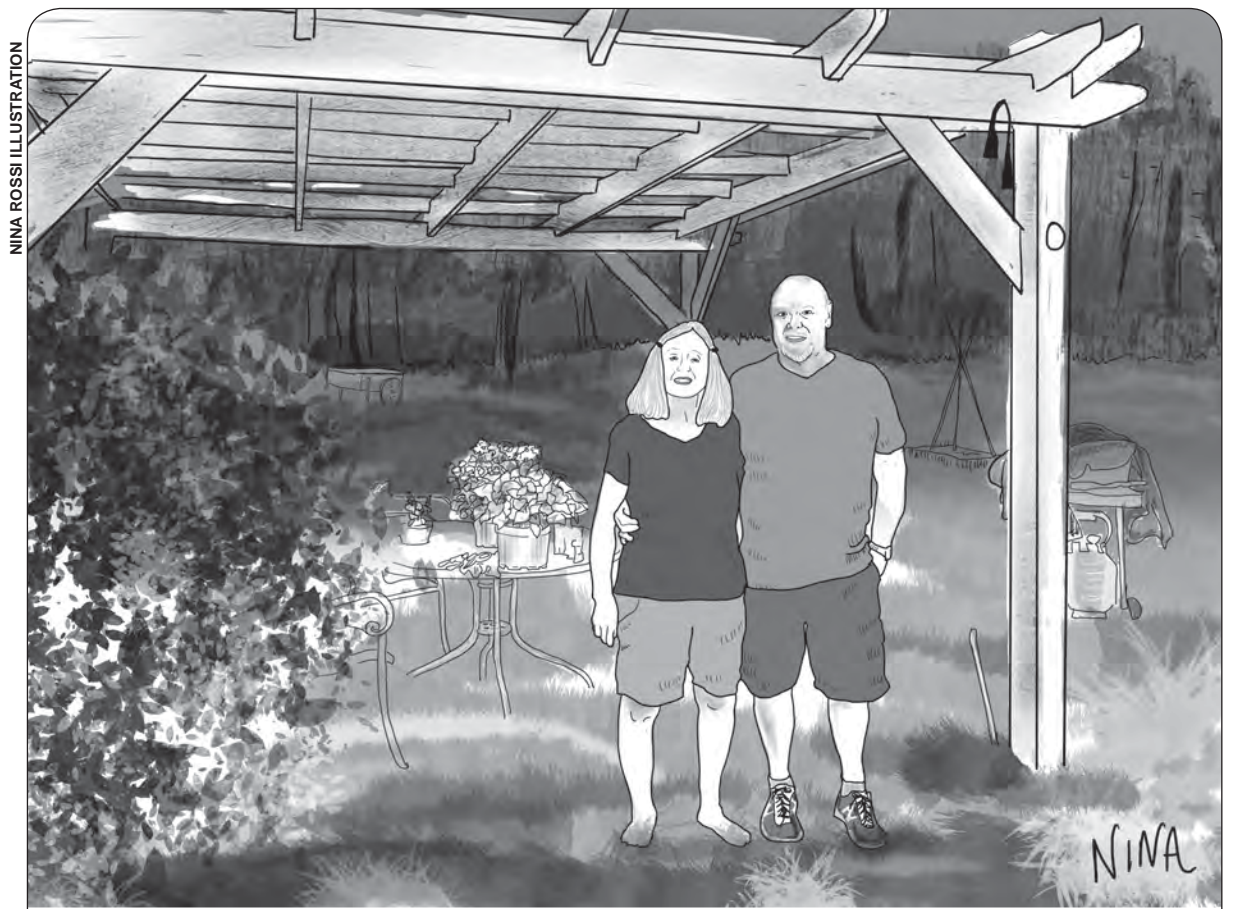
Brule said that neither the Nolumbeka Project nor the Battlefield Advisory Committee has a position on the name change proposal, and have not discussed it.

"The Advisory Committee did not wish to be drawn into the fray over the Indian logo," he added. "We really didn't have a position. But it's valid to say we have been studying the historical William Turner, as well as the people who fought with him, and the tribal people who fought and died against him."

Brule said he expected the topic to come up at this Thursday's meeting of the historical commission, though it is not on the agenda.

"My sense is that the people who are in favor of keeping the name – I don't know if they favor the fact that Turner led a massacre of 400 people at the Falls, but it's cultural," he said. "It's a team name, just as much as the Indians."

Still, Brule said, the tribal representatives and historians he works with seem to favor a different name. "Doug Harris of the Narragansett and others, every time they



Leslie Brown poses with her partner Ken under the pergola in the backyard of the home where she has lived in since 1976. Leslie has written the *Gardener's Companion* column in the *Montague Reporter* since 2006, taking over after the death of her husband Woody Brown, who wrote as the *Persistent Gardener*. See her column on Page B1 this week!

## Letters to the Editors

### Dry Hill Trails: Feedback

We love your coverage of local things more than ever during the COVID pandemic.

Some years ago we had read an article in *MR* about a new trail on Dry Hill in Montague. At the time, we checked it out, and managed to get quite lost, coming out on a road much farther down the hill and making our way back to the car. Now that we are walking regularly with the free time afforded us, we decided to return to see what improvements had been made.

As before, there was a signboard with maps at the parking area, but no trail markings. We followed what we thought was the main trail

towards Dry Hill Cemetery, taking a wrong turn at one point and backtracking to try another route. Quite far away from the parking area there were suddenly a series of very helpful blazes. The path we assumed went to the cemetery was blocked by a rushing stream.

The trail has wonderful potential. We are interested to know who has set it up, and what the plans are for future maintenance and signage.

May be a regular "local trail" feature could be run at intervals.

We would like to point *MR* readers to the numerous well-marked and maintained hiking trails in Leverett. They are administered by

the Leverett Trails Committee, with trail maps posted at trail heads and intersections, that can also be downloaded on the website of the Rattlesnake Gutter Trust, our Leverett non-profit that helps to preserve Leverett's natural beauty ([rattlesnake-guttertrust.org/p/23/Trail-Maps](http://rattlesnake-guttertrust.org/p/23/Trail-Maps)).

Some benches have been placed in scenic places, and there are even poetry-boxes to share your inspirations with the other trail users!

Thank you for your amazing paper. What a community resource!


Martin and Jude Wobst  
Leverett

### Legality Versus Morality

Americans are protesting the failure of the American system. The majority voted for Clinton. She won the popular vote by over 1 million votes. The Electoral College, in all their superior wisdom, denied the wishes of the majority of American voters. "Government of the people, by the people, for the people" has failed. If Democracy is majority

say the name, they leave out the S," he said. "Turner Falls – meaning Turner is going down."

Brule said he had expected discussion of the village's name to be broached once the Battlefield Grant study had made its final reports, but that he wasn't surprised by this week's petition.

"It's really a sign of the times," he said. "The tidal wave in response to George Floyd's murder. Everyone is looking hard at the vestiges of discrimination and racism." 

rule, Democracy itself has failed.

Yes, I'm aware that technically we are a Republic, nonetheless; America has always aspired to be democratic.

Protestors are fighting against the immorality of racism, furthered by the election of a racist, bigot, bully, and abuser of women to the presidency, as well as the rise of hateful people who support him. When that happens, the response is, "they're protesting because they didn't get their way." I say, that sounds like someone who doesn't actually understand the issue, or realize that he or she is part of the problem. Do you feel that your position in society is threatened? Well, it is, and should be.

Correct, we didn't get our way. We don't want a president who imbues hate as a matter of rule in the USA. When fighting hate is seen as whining about not getting our way, I say "thank you" to you, and those like you, for making my target that

much more clear. You are the very things we fight against: racism, bigotry, bullying, and misogyny.

Slavery was legal. Gas chambers were legal. Corraling American citizens of Japanese heritage was legal. Segregation was legal in this country. Not allowing women to vote was legal. It was apparently legal to start a war, killing thousands of Americans and civilians for weapons that literally did not exist.

Legality and justice are functions of power and wealth; they have little to do with right and wrong or morality. Be it protesting in the street, writing to your Congressman or woman, or to the Editor of your local paper, fighting racism, bigotry, and misogyny is nothing short of patriotic.

Sincerely,

Jake (f/k/a Bruce) Brown  
Spokane, WA  
(formerly of Montague Center)

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No paper fourth week of November,  
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LARKIN-ROSSI ILLUSTRATION

## LOCAL BRIEFS

Compiled by NINA ROSSI

The Turners Falls Water Department is requesting their customers take part in **voluntary water restrictions** due to the dry conditions in the area. “At the present time our water supply shows no imminent sign of being at risk,” they write. “We will continue to monitor water levels and will advise if further conservation measures are needed.”

The Brattleboro Museum & Art Center is hosting a livestream tonight, Thursday June 25, featuring photographer Alison Wright speaking about her exhibit of photographs of working women in developing countries called “**Grit and Grace, Women at Work.**” The photos show women working in some extremely harsh conditions, practicing unique resilience and innovation.

Wright will share their stories, show images not in the exhibit, and place her work within her own very unusual personal history. She is a documentary photographer, a *National Geographic* Traveler of the Year, a recipient of the Dorothea Lange Award in Documentary Photography, and the author of multiple books.

The Brattleboro Museum & Art

Center is open now, but limiting attendance to 40 people at a time. Masks must be worn, hand sanitizer is available, and the museum has instituted a pay-what-you-can admissions fee. The talk is free, and can be accessed via Zoom through the Museum’s Facebook page or on their website, [www.brattleboromuseum.org](http://www.brattleboromuseum.org).

Are you a gardener in the villages of Montague, with surplus veggies to share? Drawdown Montague is coordinating a **weekly pickup of garden surplus.**

They will come by on Tuesday mornings to pick up the produce, and deliver it to the food pantry at the Survival Center in Turners Falls. If you want to contribute extra produce when you have it, please contact Susan Campbell by email at [campbellsm3rd@gmail.com](mailto:campbellsm3rd@gmail.com) or leave a phone message (413) 367-0168. The start date is Tuesday, July 7. Help get fresh, healthy food to those who need it!

As you all probably know by now, the Green River Festival has been canceled after 33 consecutive years running. Festival organizers and radio station 93.9 FM The River have announced a three-day radio and webcast event on the weekend

when the festival would have taken place. On July 10, 11, and 12, the “**Green River Festival on the Air**” will feature live sets from festival favorites past and present, plus exclusive backstage performances, artist interviews, and fan memories.

Festival director Jim Olsen reports that he was heartened by the fact that most fans who had already purchased tickets for the 2020 festival have not requested a refund, and are holding on to the tickets for next year’s event. “We want to show our appreciation and bring together our festival community by offering an incredible weekend of performances,” he said. “We’re envisioning mini-listening parties in backyards and parks and hope to bring the spirit of the festival into homes everywhere.”

Janice Beetle of Beetle Press in Easthampton has created Poem Pods, a free, 20-day **series of podcasts for children and families.** Her co-host is her own 11-year-old grandson, Eli. She writes that Poem Pods are “fun poems and fun stories for fun people. My hope is that they give children encouragement, entertainment, and inspiration to get them thinking creatively as a summer without camps and public pools begins.”

Each Poem Pod episode explores a theme – such as family, friendship, inspiration, vulnerability, fears, and asking for help – through discussions, the reading of an original poem, and a suggested related activity. In many episodes Eli interviews a guest. For instance, on July 2 he talks with a healthcare

worker about what it’s like on her job and how she feels about wearing a mask all day.

See the complete lineup of these homegrown broadcasts at [www.janicebeetlebooks.com](http://www.janicebeetlebooks.com).

Hilltown Families wants folks to know about their **virtual program, “Hilltown Families Presents,”** a partnership with local artists, performers, individuals and organizations to deliver educational and entertaining content to families at home.

Hilltown Families is a community-based education network serving all of western Massachusetts. Founder Sienna Wildfield writes that the first season has seen the premiere of the “Tom Knight Show,” featuring a local puppeteer, and Northampton Center for the Arts’ production “Hawley Street,” a Sesame Street-style variety show.

“For our next season, we will continue by showcasing the arts and welcome proposals from individuals and local business owners interested in teaching a skill and sharing their expertise,” she writes. Access both shows online at any time at [www.hilltownfamilies.wordpress.com](http://www.hilltownfamilies.wordpress.com).

The Deerfield Valley Art Association announces an **artistic Mask Contest.** While many people have crafted their own masks for personal protection during the pandemic, DVAA is asking folks to take a step sideways and create with imagination rather than practicality.

The mask should be made of objects found in your home, car, or yard. They can be beautiful, humorous, outrageous, or what have you. For inspiration, they suggest looking up the work of Corina Alvarezdeluga, whose masks were featured at [www.newhavenarts.org](http://www.newhavenarts.org).

The contest is open to all, and submissions are taken until July 10 by emailing photos in .jpeg format to [margedvaa@gmail.com](mailto:margedvaa@gmail.com). There are two divisions: Teen and Adult (ages 13 and over) and Youth 12 and under. Finalists will be determined by a panel of judges.

Winners will receive a \$35 gift certificate which may be spent at the DVAA’s Northfield gallery (currently closed).

Silverthorne Theater Company’s second **Theater Thursday play reading** is a few weeks away on July 16, but since we are dropping to our every-other-week schedule after this issue – and since events are as scarce as raindrops these days – I’m throwing it in the mix anyways.

The reading will be a co-production, with the Chester Theater Company of Northampton, of playwright Darcy Bruce’s play *Soldier Poet*. It centers on the story of two US Army Rangers in Aleppo, Syria who rescue an injured and very pregnant Syrian woman, and a neonatal nurse in a nearby hospital who struggles to save the lives of infants while her hospital is being bombed.

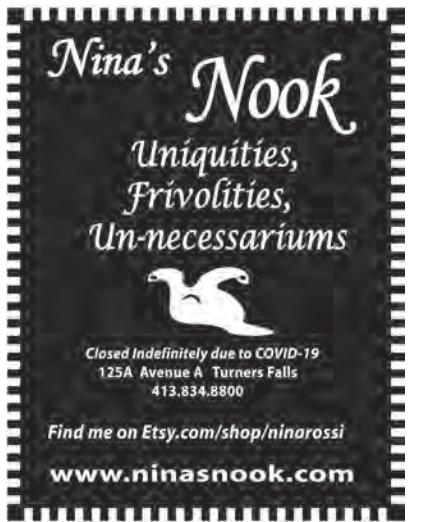
The free reading is directed by Daniel Elihu Kramer of the Chester Theater. Tune in at 7 p.m. on Thursday, July 16 via Silverthorne Theater’s Facebook page, or the Silverthorne Theater channel on YouTube.

The **next issue** of the *Montague Reporter* will come out on July 9. Enjoy the summer!

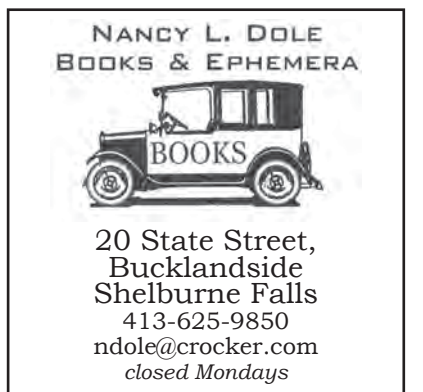
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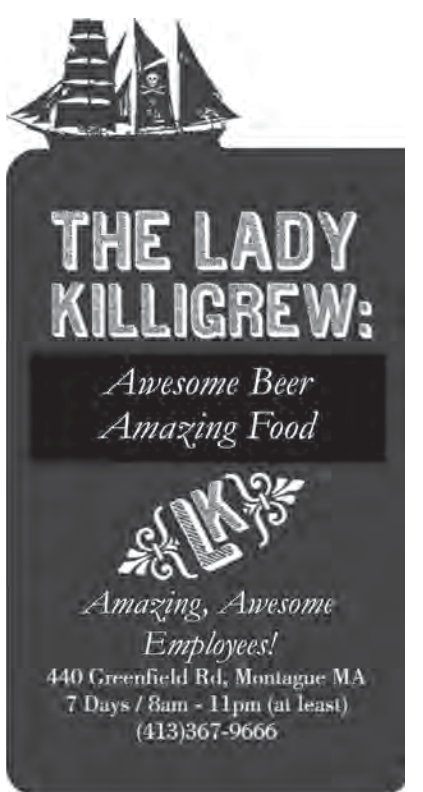


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# More Letters to the Editors

## Coop Appreciation

Dear Friends and Neighbors:

I write in response to the “paid advertisement” which has now run twice in the *Montague Reporter* that slams the Leverett Village Coop.

I have been a faithful and appreciative customer of the Coop for decades and visit several times every week. And I have supported the store with generous donations (gifts, not loans) in their times of financial challenges.

The Coop is more than a store, it is a community. Yes, I can get a delicious sandwich, a bottle of wine, or a chocolate chip cookie

“to die for.” But even more important to me is the welcoming ambience. The staff greet one and all, and most even know customers by name. Many times over the years I have met friends at the Coop to share a lunch (when the kitchen had delicious daily offerings).

The dedication of the staff is now evident as many are volunteering their time. As one dedicated volunteer and Board member, Karen Traub, writes in the *Reporter* recently, “People, not profit, is the reason for coops.” On one occasion I remember well, a former store manager loaned me a chair

from the dining area because we were hosting an outdoor family party in the neighborhood and didn’t have enough chairs.

I’m sorry that the author of that “paid advertisement” (that cost over \$100, I believe) has to live with such negativity. For me, the Coop brings the refreshment (literal and “spiritual”), needed now more than ever in these troubling times.

Thank you for being there, dear Village Coop. March on!

Margo Culley  
Wendell

## More Helpful Suggestions

Turners Falls is the name of one *village* out of the five villages that make up the *town* of Montague. “Five fingers on one hand”: so says the Town Seal.

I know it’s a nuance of municipality, but I believe that it’s a crucial one. I am proposing to fellow MR readers, and Montague citizens, that we should remember this distinction and continue to underscore it in our day-to-day usage.

While a certain village is long overdue for a name change from its bloody colonial skidmark of a name, I would hope that my fellow citizens can prioritize the more-pressing material concerns for our more vulnerable neighbors, and let this matter of symbolic concern hang out in a parking lot just a little bit longer.

In the meantime, please continue to get to know

your neighbors, and take care of each other. Remember, it’s only a village name – and apparently, if the past 100 to 200 years is any indicator, names can very easily and quickly change.

When and if the time for a referendum on Montague village names comes, I would humbly like to submit the following new names for these villages:

- Turners Falls: Peskeomskut
- Millers Falls: Rodney’s Corners
- Lake Pleasant: No change, or maybe The Palm
- Montague City: Cheapside Monty
- Montague Center: Hobbyfarm Hollow

Thanks,

Neil “cloaca” Young  
Turners Falls

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**LEVERETT** from page A1

and highway departments for all their work setting the meeting up, traffic duty, and safety measures, Farber introduced state representative Natalie Blais, who thanked the selectboard and other town officials for “making the town meeting happen during these really difficult times.”

Blais shared her appreciation for Leverett’s work in addressing systemic racism, and told residents to contact her with questions and concerns about issues important to them. “Whether it is an unemployment claim, housing, or food security issues, or comments on the state’s reopening plans,” said Blais, “or if you want to talk about how the state is taking steps to end racism in our Commonwealth, I want you to know that you can reach out to me.”

“I also want to thank you for being here today to show our Commonwealth how important our annual town meetings are to us,” Blais said, “and the lengths that we are going to participate in and protect our democracy.”

#### Elections & Housekeeping

**Article 1**, casting a single ballot for all uncontested seats, passed unanimously, and the following residents were elected or re-elected to office: Catherine Ford and Jim Staros for the board of assessors; Sarah Todd and Peter Sylvan for the board of health; John Schwartz for constable; Ann Delano and Jed Proujansky for fin com; Chris Condit and Joan Godsey, library trustees; Tom Ewing and Steve Freedman, planning board; Craig Cohen for school committee; and Tom Hankinson for selectboard.

Vacancies will be filled by the selectboard. A vacant seat remained on the school committee.

**Article 2** extended the revenue committee’s mandate to seek revenue opportunities for Leverett.

**Articles 3 through 13**, “housekeeping” items, were accepted as proposed, and passed unanimously. \$80,000 in free cash was put into stabilization to fund the capital plan, and \$10,000 from the fiber-optic construction account moved to the town debt principal account. \$22,745.29 received from Medicaid for special education costs at the elementary school went into the “Other Post-Employment Benefits” account, and another

\$2,000 went to the school’s FY’21 operating budget to cover incurred Medicaid reporting expenses.

\$89,154 from an unspent school building fund went into the stabilization account; \$803.66 was transferred from bond premiums reserved for school debt payment to the town’s interest account, and another \$941.22 into the school’s interest account.

#### Many Money Items

Carried on a 4/5 vote were bills of prior year transferred from free cash. **Article 14** transferred \$3,254 to pay Franklin County Solid Waste Management for FY’20, and **Article 15** transferred \$4,276 to pay a benefits invoice for Union 28 employees.

Selectboard member Julie Shively explained that **Article 16** resolved a disagreement over the Amherst-Pelham Regional School District agreement, amended as a one-time only FY’21 adjustment. “This temporary solution, which we used last year,” she said, “is being carried over to this year. The regional school budget, I believe, is level-funded for the rest of this year, so we feel we need to get through this year, pass this one, and maybe someday come to a permanent resolution.”

The Leverett town hall chimney will be cleaned and repointed using \$6,900 from free cash, and another \$11,025 was approved for the library’s geothermal heating system repairs. New radios and related equipment for the police and fire departments will be purchased using \$48,000 from stabilization, passed on a 2/3 vote, so the departments can upgrade to the current state system. \$13,000 from free cash was voted retroactively for a boiler that burned out and had been replaced at the safety complex, and the police department will build a larger evidence room using another \$2,950.

The fire department was approved for \$4,600 from free cash to purchase two sets of turnout gear, and \$2,250 toward a 5% FEMA grant match that will allow the department to purchase updated “Jaws of Life” and other vehicle extraction equipment.

A 2/3 vote passed to borrow \$227,500 for the purchase of a multi-purpose excavator/mower for the highway department. The older backhoe equipment will re-

main in service for backup and emergency use.

The town buildings and the elementary school will use \$7,000 from free cash for a voice-over-internet-protocol phone system, and \$6,000 more will go toward an air-conditioning system for the server room at the school. Passed on a 2/3 vote was \$13,000 from stabilization to replace a leaking gas stove at the school.

**Article 33** approved an amendment to the Leverett zoning bylaw on temporary storage units to include more uses for small businesses, and close a loophole regarding unit placement. The change needs approval by the attorney general.

**Article 34** removed an outdated easement on the property of Denzel and Frances Hankinson. Tom Hankinson recused himself from the voting and discussion.

#### Wells Debated, Again

**Article 25** sought to transfer \$14,263 from free cash for expenses related to a deep-well exploration study in the Teawaddle Hill neighborhood.

Selectboard chair Peter d’Errico explained that the article funds were already spent to explore the deep-well option voted on at the 2019 town meeting, “which didn’t work out,” he said. “Although these funds were approved for borrowing, this is a small enough amount that we chose to pay for it from free cash because it’s cheaper and simpler than borrowing, and we do owe the money.”

Virginia Goodale, whose well is among several apparently contaminated by leachate from a capped town-owned landfill, asked for an amendment, arguing that the money had originally been appropriated to explore multiple solutions.

“This is not about borrowing any additional funds,” she said. “This is for the sum of \$14,263 for expenses related to the exploration of the deep-well solution... and to get the water line project [to Amherst] shovel-ready by contracting the Tata & Howard engineering firm, and authorizing the treasurer to make the approved borrowing for that contract by the last day of July 2020.”

“I can appreciate that,” Farber responded, “but... I have to deny your amendment. As moderator I am required to not allow outside or ancillary additional money to

be added to the voting budget. If it was not put on the article, I can’t do it. It is outside of the scope of the article.”


“And I apologize in the sense of I understand it’s an important issue,” Farber added, “and we can have a special town meeting if it really needs to be dealt with, but it’s not being properly brought before the town articles.”

“It’s not about spending more money,” said Stephen Nagy, another resident with a contaminated well. “People have to understand that this is not *more money* being spent for this article – that it’s taking money from a different source than what was already approved. It makes it appear as though this problem, that has been going on for many years, is now being presented as another thing that needs to be approved to spend \$14,000. You are already approved to spend \$150,000. I’ll let you answer that question.”

“If we borrow the money that we already have,” argued Shively, “we end up paying interest on it, which leaves even less money for the well project. We approved the Amherst water line last year, but the town wanted us to first explore the deep-water option. Now we have moved on, and we are negotiating with the town of Amherst. This in no way affects those negotiations – this just saves the town a little bit of money.”

D’Errico added that Leverett is still in negotiations with Amherst on the potential water line, and pointed out that Amherst has redesigned the project using different materials, lowering cost estimates. “We are now approaching a slightly increased cost of a water line,” he said, “rather than a double of the cost of the value of the houses.”

**Article 26**, a one-time \$5,000 transfer from free cash for state-mandated testing of per- and poly-fluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) in the Teawaddle Hill groundwater, was amended on a request from Patricia Duffy to clarify that the target area be designated as “Teawaddle Hill neighborhood” rather than Teawaddle Hill Road, and specify that the testing cover “six homes on Teawaddle Hill Road, two homes on Cushman Road, and one home on East Leverett Road in Amherst.”

The article passed as amended. 

**GILL** from page A1

better to spend that money, and not carry a deficit. He said most related costs will eventually be covered by FEMA and CARES Act money.

The board also conducted its annual reorganization, with Randy Crochier taking over as chair, Greg Snedeker as clerk, and no changes to members’ assignments as representatives to town committees and local organizations. Annual appointments to town positions were also approved.

Board members briefly discussed when the town might end its own emergency declaration, and agreed it should certainly remain in place as long as the state’s emergency declaration is still in effect. John Ward commented that though Gill and Franklin County have not been hit as hard as other areas, “We’re not out of the woods yet.”

#### Traffic Grant

The board authorized Purington to pursue a state “Shared Streets and Spaces” grant, which was announced by MassDOT several days after the previous selectboard meeting. At that meeting, potential “traffic calming” measures for the center of town were dis-

cussed, in part to increase safety for expanded outdoor dining at the Gill Tavern during the state of emergency.

The “quick launch, quick build” grant program seeks to “improve sidewalks, curbs, streets, on-street parking spaces, and off-street parking lots in support of public health, safe mobility, and renewed commerce” in response to needs brought about by COVID-19.

“What a perfect fit,” said Ward.

Purington reported that he met at the site with Laurie Scarborough of the Franklin Regional Council of Governments to discuss options, including solar-powered “Your Speed” signs, signage for pedestrians, and barriers. He said Scarborough would help with the grant request.

The board also decided to apply for money from the “Coronavirus Emergency Supplemental Funding Program for Local Municipal Police and Fire Departments,” offered through the state Executive Office of Public Safety and Security.

#### Public Health Coop

The board approved a request from the Cooperative Public Health Service (CPHS) for Gill to commit up to \$7,236 of the town’s

CARES Act funding to the organization.

Purington reported that the service’s current budget for public health nurse staffing for FY’21 only includes one full-time public health nurse. He said the concern was that if there’s an increase in COVID-19 issues, CPHS will need surge staffing similar to what has been in place since March or early April.

The nurses and health agents are responsible for contact tracing, quarantine and isolation tracking, and coordinating with local hospitals on discharge and testing, and also respond to businesses with questions on proper reopening procedures, problem-solving, enforcement of complaints, along with providing guidance and tech support for all member towns.

The proposal increases public health nurse and public health agent staffing by half of a full-time equivalent for each position. Purington said the CPHS was one of the “key, frontline, hands-on” components of Gill’s COVID-19 response, and that due to the CARES Act money being intended for COVID-related help, said, “I think it’s absolutely the right way to spend the money.”


Crochier, a public health agent for CPHS, recused himself from the vote.

#### Other Business

Trash day has been moved to Thursday at 7 a.m., as of July 2. Collection of different recyclable materials will alternate between paper and cardboard one week, and glass, metal and plastic, the other.

Purington reported that a renewal proposal from USA Waste for a new hauling contract came in at twice what the town was currently paying, when everything was factored in. He said he was directed by the town board of health to put the contract out to bid, and the numbers got better, but he ended up negotiating with the winning bidder in Erving’s search, Casella Waste Systems of Holyoke, and getting a better deal.

Purington said he will send out a mailer with more information, including a calendar with the schedule for recyclables, but more detailed information will be forthcoming on the town’s website. Due to rising disposal costs, the rule allowing for one trash sticker for the contents of a garbage can has ended, and trash fees are now “one sticker per bag, period.”

The board also approved a purchase order of \$1,742 for three desktop computers and a monitor, to replace machines from 2011 and 2012. 

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**DRY** from page A1

those bills are calculated based on water usage. He suspects that concern alone prompts people to voluntarily curb their water use.

"I know I have not been watering," Suprenant said.

What we are experiencing now, technically, is not called a drought.

These conditions are listed as "abnormally dry" by the United States Department of Agriculture.

While we may think of a dry spell as bad for farms, there's more to it than that. Some crops love this weather.

Upinngil Farm in Gill, owned by Clifford Hatch, relies on wells for watering.

Hatch's son-in-law Isaac Bingham, a manager at the farm, explained that they put in a second well about six years ago after a dry season stressed the older well on the farm. Bingham said their strawberries are having a great year.

"We benefit by being diversified," Bingham said.

Bingham handed the phone to Hatch.

"I'm hot!" Hatch hollered, then, chuckling, went on to explain the situation with the strawberries. "They're not decaying from too much moisture," as they have in wetter seasons, he said. "They're really significantly better with dry conditions."

"I was up cultivating potatoes and everything looked fine. At least when it is dry we can do some serious cultivating," Hatch said. "The dry weather is certainly better than

wet periods."

When he was learning to farm, back in the 1960s, Hatch said his mentor had a saying: "A dry year will scare you to death, but a wet year will starve you."

Farmers in our region, he explained, have come to expect wet springs that aren't ideal for crops. Some hot, dry weather is good for growing. "I hope it stays relatively dry until we get the grains harvested," Hatch added, referring to the wheat and rye Upinngil sells.

So, how does this June's precipitation rate against previous years?

According to data collected by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the average precipitation in our region for the month of June from 2010 to 2019 was 5.62 inches.

During that decade, the wettest June was in 2013, when 10.90 inches of rain fell, and 2016 brought the driest June with just 2.22 inches. So far, as of June 22, we've had 0.47 inches of rain, less than a quarter of that.

NOAA also forecasts that our region will have lower than average precipitation, and higher than average temperatures, during the next 8 to 14 days.

At Dancing Bear Farm in Leyden, Tom Ashley farms organic produce, now including figs.

"Some things do get water and some are going to suffer," Ashley said. "We have to prioritize."

Ashley's wife, Trish Crapo, writes the ArtBeat column for the

Montague Reporter, and helps on the farm.

Dancing Bear has "a very rudimentary irrigation system," Ashley explained. "Some things are set up with drip tape, which is very efficient and quick. Some larger fields have overhead sprinklers, which have to be moved four times in a day."

Ashley worries about the effect of the heat on workers on the farm. "I keep that in consideration, not to stress them, give them breaks, give them short days, spread things out," he said.

While keeping crops watered is a challenge, Ashley reasoned that "you can't take away water, but you can always add it." The dry weather has also helped keep the weeds in check.

At Dancing Bear Farm, they draw on a spring-fed pond for watering – which, Ashley noted, he is grateful has always been full.

Even so, "there is nothing like a good rain," Ashley laughed. "I would be out there dancing."

One crop that has declined with this steamy weather is not really a crop, but milk production. Cows don't like it too warm, and when it gets hot, they stay in the shade, eat less, and, as a result, they make less milk.

"They have a really hard time," Upinngil Farm's Hatch said, with the heat. "Imagine being a 1,500-pound fermentation machine with four stomachs. They really like the snow on their backs."

Snow. Now there's a thought.



**ELECTION** from page A1

The write-in mania created an unexpectedly competitive environment downballot, after a number of residents offered their names for open town meeting seats in each precinct, as well as for Montague's two seats on the regional school committee.

The school committee race was carried by Cassie Damkoehler, who had a change of heart and decided to run again for the seat she was leaving, and political newcomer Carleigh Dlugosz, with 280 and 157 votes districtwide. The next two runners-up, Denise Aiken (132) and Kathy Lynch (73), had been endorsed by the town meeting members who led the effort to freeze the police budget a week earlier.

Montague town clerk Deb Bourbeau called Monday's 18% voter turnout "awesome," comparing with 8% to 10% in a typical town election. About two in five votes, Bourbeau said, were received by mail.

Bourbeau said the town's new optical-scanning voting machines were working well – "although we wouldn't know it from this election, because there were so many write-ins," she told the Reporter with a laugh. "I think about one-quarter of our ballots could totally be scanned. Everything else had write-in votes that we had to count!"

Across the river in Gill, town clerk Doreen Stevens reports a turnout of just under 9%. There were no competitive races on the ballot, but voters in both Gill and Montague vote for school committee members from both towns, and Damkoehler, Dlugosz, Aiken, and Lynch all received write-in votes there, too. Greg Snedeker was re-elected to the Gill selectboard unopposed. Stevens said 45 of the 98 votes cast in Gill were absentee ballots.

**Polarization**

"Despite the fact that Ashley and I may have had some differences, I cannot appreciate and respect her enough for the fact that she ran," Nelson told the Reporter. "For the past several years there's been no opposition."

Nelson said he felt the election "got really polarized in the last few days, which is really unfortunate.... Anything that is talked about on social media, as opposed to having face-to-face conversations, is never portrayed the way it should be."

"I decided to run because I felt that in our current climate, it is important to stand up and speak firmly about what you believe in," Arthur said on Wednesday. "I hope this campaign will inspire other women, and minority folks in our town to run for something.... I think a lot of issues came up during the campaign that are being spoken about more loudly, and hopefully we as a community can create real positive change moving forward."

Arthur said she does not plan to run in the future, but hopes to serve the community in other capacities.

**G-M School Committee**

"I was not planning to run again, but was willing to come on for a year if no one did," Cassie Damkoehler said of her return to the school committee. "At the last second, I realized how important it was to have someone with knowledge and experience, given that we have a brand new super coming in, and we're in the midst of a pandemic."

Damkoehler, like Nelson, passed out ballot stickers for her write-in campaign. "Mike Nelson is a close friend of mine, and we have many mutual friends," she said, "so many of our friends who passed out his sticker also passed out mine."

Damkoehler, who teaches in Greenfield public schools, said support from the teachers' union had also been significant. She added that she had been friends with Carleigh Dlugosz for years, and was excited to work with her.

Dlugosz, who grew up in Erving and Turners Falls and owns Textur Beauty Bar, said her campaign offered stickers to those voters "who needed my address and correct spelling." "I was very surprised by the amount of support I got," she wrote. "I am very thankful that so many people believe I'll be a great asset to the community."

**"Anything that is talked about on social media, as opposed to having face-to-face conversations, is never portrayed the way it should be."  
– Michael Nelson**

Dlugosz, a mother of students at Hillcrest and Sheffield elementaries, said she has had mixed experiences with the schools, but is willing to listen and learn "the hows and whys things happen in the district."

"I know there have been concerns and frustrations from the public over the last few years," she told the Reporter. "I would like to be able to better support those who are in our schools on the front line, as well as making sure our children are getting the support and resources they need and deserve."

**Endorsements**

As of Wednesday, Bourbeau was still confirming with final write-in victors that they would, in fact, like to serve on Montague town meeting.

The winning write-in candidates were Matt Lord, Precinct 1; Matt Atwood, Andrew Steward, Joanna Mae Boody, Caleb Hiliadis, Michael Ketcham, and Megan Smith, Precinct 2; Jennifer Holmes, Carleigh and Jacob Dlugosz, Cody Wells, Lisa Kingsbury, and Zachary Billings, Precinct 3; Thomasina and Richard Hall, Precinct 4; Brian Brownell and two unconfirmed candidates, Precinct 5; and one unconfirmed candidate, Precinct 6.

Of the 19 town meeting write-in victors, 11 were endorsed in a Letter to the Editors of this newspaper last week by Montague Defund, an *ad hoc* coalition formed around cutting police spending.

While the Defund group made no endorsements in the selectboard race, Arthur had praised last week's vote to eliminate growth from the police budget, while Nelson had opposed the budget amendment.

"Her side, quote-unquote, was viewed as anti-police, my side as pro-police," Nelson said. "In reality I think that we are relatively close in mindset: we both realize that there's a real concern in the nation right now about the way black people are treated, and we recognize that it should be a major concern at all levels."

"Some people thought taking that stance meant that I would never consider touching the police, or the police budget, and meanwhile she got portrayed in the opposite light," Nelson continued. "I think the majority [advocating police defunding] in our community are leaning toward a reassessment phase, and that's not something I'm opposed to."

Nelson said he was looking forward to the work of a newly forming police advisory committee. "We might find it's a better use of funding to do other programs with some of the funding," he said, "but I was

uncomfortable at town meeting to take the step of knocking \$50,000 out of the [police] budget without putting that process in place."

Arthur's endorsement last week of a petition to change the name of Turners Falls to Great Falls may also have stimulated turnout in favor of Nelson – and, indirectly, in favor of those whose write-in campaigns overlapped with his. Dlugosz's margin of victory over Denise Aiken – a total of 25 voters between Montague and Gill – amounted to 3.5% of the total number who wrote in Nelson on Monday.

Asked his opinion of the name change proposal, Nelson pointed toward the work of the Battlefield Grant Advisory Committee, which oversees a process involving five local towns and representatives of Wampanoag, Narragansett, Nipmuc, and Mohican groups.

"I don't have any intentions to put forth the process to change the name," he said. "If there were to be conversations about it we would want to reach back with the various Native American representatives that we've had dialogue with in the past."

"Hopefully the final voter tally shows that there is a large amount of folks in our town concerned with these big issues," Arthur said. "Mike Nelson is a great member of our Selectboard, and I look forward to him continuing to do a diligent job."

"Over the next few weeks and months we'll probably have some very uncomfortable conversations, that will ultimately lead to some great results," Nelson said of the police advisory committee, which he said has received about "a dozen" letters of interest. "We're taking it seriously and want to see these changes – we've heard very clearly from our constituents that there's a problem that they're concerned with."



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## 2019 Water Quality Report

### Turners Falls Water Department

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We are once again proud to present our annual water quality report, covering all testing performed between January 1 and December 31, 2019. Over the years, we have dedicated ourselves to producing drinking water that meets all state and federal standards. We continually strive to adopt new methods for delivering the best quality drinking water to you. As new challenges to drinking water safety emerge, we remain vigilant in meeting the goals of source water protection, water conservation, and community education while continuing to serve the needs of all our water users.

Please share with us your thoughts or concerns about the information in this report. After all, well-informed customers are our best allies. For more information about this report, or for any questions relating to your drinking water, please call Michael Brown, Water Department Superintendent, or Suzanne Leh, Clerk/Collector, at (413) 863-4542.

#### Community Participation

You are invited to participate in our public forum and voice your concerns about your drinking water. We meet the first Wednesday of each month, beginning at 5 p.m., at the Water Department Office, 226 Millers Falls Road, Turners Falls. Our Annual Meeting of the Turners Falls Fire District is held the third Tuesday in April.

Our Department Board of Water Commissioners: Kenneth Morin, Stephen Call, Bruce Merriam. Pump Station Operators: Jeffrey Hildreth, Stephen Fitzpatrick, Harry Kennedy.

#### Where Does My Water Come From?

The Turners Falls Water Department's main source of water consists of two artesian wells located off Center Street in Montague Center. These gravel-packed Wells #1192000 1G and #1192000 2G pump 1.2 to 2 million gallons of water per day to the filter plant. At the plant, the water is sand filtered for the removal of iron and manganese; the treated, filtered water is then discharged into the gravity-fed distribution system.

The Hannegan Brook Well located near Lake Pleasant can yield

1.44 MGD to meet future water demands. The water quality is good and only requires the addition of water treatment chemicals for pH adjustment. The storage facilities in Turners Falls have a total storage capacity of 6.3 million gallons. Lake Pleasant and Green Pond are emergency backup surface water supplies.

Please call Mike or Suzanne to answer any questions at (413) 863-4542, email [clerk@turnersfallswater.com](mailto:clerk@turnersfallswater.com), or [www.turnersfallswater.com](http://www.turnersfallswater.com).

#### Important Health Information

Some people may be more vulnerable to contaminants in drinking water than the general population. Immunocompromised persons such as persons with cancer undergoing chemotherapy, persons who have undergone organ transplants, people with HIV/AIDS or other immune system disorders, some elderly, and infants may be particularly at risk from infections.

These people should seek advice about drinking water from their health care providers. The U.S. EPA/CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) guidelines on appropriate means to lessen the risk of infection by *Cryptosporidium* and other microbial contaminants are available from the Safe Drinking Water Hotline at (800) 426-4791 or <http://water.epa.gov/drink/hotline>.

#### Substances That Could Be in Water

To ensure that tap water is safe to drink, the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA) prescribe regulations limiting the amount of certain contaminants in water provided by public water systems. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) regulations establish limits for contaminants in bottled water, which must provide the same protection for public health. Drinking water, including bottled water, may reasonably be expected to contain at least small amounts of some contaminants. The presence of these contaminants does not necessarily indicate that the water poses a health risk.

The sources of drinking water

(both tap water and bottled water) include rivers, lakes, streams, ponds, reservoirs, springs, and wells. As water travels over the surface of the land or through the ground, it dissolves naturally occurring minerals and, in some cases, radioactive material, and can pick up substances resulting from the presence of animals or from human activity.

Substances that may be present in source water include: Microbial Contaminants, such as viruses and bacteria, which may come from sewage treatment plants, septic systems, agricultural livestock operations, or wildlife; Inorganic Contaminants, such as salts and metals, which can be naturally occurring or may result from urban storm water runoff, industrial or domestic wastewater discharges, oil and gas production, mining, or farming; Pesticides and Herbicides, which may come from a variety of sources, such as agriculture, urban storm water runoff, and residential uses; Organic Chemical Contaminants, including synthetic and volatile organic chemicals, which are by-products of industrial processes and petroleum production and which may also come from gas stations, urban storm water runoff, and septic systems; and Radioactive Contaminants, which can be naturally occurring or may be the result of oil and gas production and mining activities.

More information about contaminants and potential health effects can be obtained by calling the U.S. EPA's Safe Drinking Water Hotline at (800) 426-4791.

#### Lead in Drinking Water

*How does lead get in my drinking water?*

In Massachusetts, most drinking water sources like reservoirs and groundwater are lead free. When lead is present in water, it is typically due to the water flowing through lead pipes or plumbing in homes with lead parts or solder. Service lines, which are the pipes that connect your home to the water main, could have lead in them. Inside your home, you may have lead pipes, copper pipes connected with lead solder, or brass faucets or fittings containing lead. Lead levels are highest when the water has been sitting in lead pipes for several hours. Hot water causes lead to enter water faster.

*How does lead get into my body?*

In many cases, most exposure to lead is from paint dust, paint chips and soil contaminated with lead. Lead can also get into your body by drinking or cooking with water containing lead. Young children absorb lead more easily than adults, and lead can be passed from a mother to her unborn child. For

these reasons, lead in drinking water can be an important source of exposure for pregnant women, young children, and infants that are fed powdered formula.

Lead is not absorbed through the skin. Bathing or showering in water containing lead should be safe.

*What can I do right now to protect my family?*

Run your water before using and use COLD water. Always use cold water for drinking and cooking. Do not use hot water for cooking or baby formula. Hot water usually has higher lead levels than cold water. Running the water before using will usually reduce any lead levels by flushing out the water that has been sitting in lead pipes for several hours.

Boiling water does not eliminate lead. If there is lead in your water, boiling it will increase lead levels.

#### Water Conservation

You can play a role in conserving water and save yourself money in the process by becoming conscious of the amount of water your household is using and by looking for ways to use less whenever you can. It is not hard to conserve water.

Here are a few tips: Automatic dishwashers use 15 gallons for every cycle, regardless of how many dishes are loaded. So get a run for your money and load it to capacity.

Turn off the tap when brushing your teeth.

Check every faucet in your home for leaks. Just a slow drip can waste 15 to 20 gallons a day. Fix it and you can save almost 6,000 gallons per year.

Check your toilets for leaks by putting a few drops of food coloring in the tank. Watch for a few minutes to see if the color shows up in the bowl. It is not uncommon to lose up to 100 gallons a day from an invisible toilet leak. Fix it and you save more than 30,000 gallons a year.

Use your water meter to detect hidden leaks. Write down the meter reading before going to bed at night or leaving for a day. Include all numbers, write down the new reading in the morning and subtract the prior reading. If there has been a change it is probably due to a leak.

#### What's a Cross-connection?

Cross-connections that contaminate drinking water distribution lines are a major concern. A cross-connection is formed at any point where a drinking water line connects to equipment (boilers), systems containing chemicals (air conditioning systems, fire sprinkler systems, irrigation systems), or water sources of questionable quality. Cross-connection contamination can occur when the pressure in

the equipment or system is greater than the pressure inside the drinking water line (backpressure). Contamination can also occur when the pressure in the drinking water line drops due to fairly routine occurrences (main breaks, heavy water demand), causing contaminants to be sucked out from the equipment and into the drinking water line (backsiphonage).

Outside water taps and garden hoses tend to be the most common sources of cross-connection contamination at home. The garden hose creates a hazard when submerged in a swimming pool or when attached to a chemical sprayer for weed killing. Garden hoses that are left lying on the ground may be contaminated by fertilizers, cesspools, or garden chemicals.

Improperly installed valves in your toilet could also be a source of cross-connection contamination.

Community water supplies are continuously jeopardized by cross-connections unless appropriate valves, known as backflow prevention devices, are installed and maintained. For more information, review the Cross-connection Control Manual from the U.S. EPA's Web site at <http://water.epa.gov/infrastructure/drinkingwater/prws/crossconnectioncontrol/index.cfm>. You can also call the Safe Drinking Water Hotline at (800) 426-4791.

#### Source Water Assessment, Protecting Turners Falls Water Supply:

The Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) has prepared a Source Water Assessment Program (SWAP) for the water supply serving this water system. This report is a planning tool to support local and state efforts to improve water supply protection. Although the TFWD has many safeguards in place, the overall susceptibility ranking to contamination of the groundwater supplies is high, based on the presence of numerous high-ranking threat land-uses within the Zone II water supply protection areas. The report commends our water system on its proactive approach to source protection. A complete SWAP report is available at the TFWD, the Board of Health office, and online at <http://www.mass.gov/dep/water/drinking/swa-preps.htm>. For more information, call the TFWD at 863-4542.

#### Things You Can Do to Protect Our Water Supply

Take used motor oil and other such fluids to the town's hazardous waste collection sites, use fertilizers and pesticides sparingly, and do not use the river beds to dispose of any waste.

## Turners Falls Water Quality Data

During the past year, we have taken hundreds of water samples in order to determine the presence of any radioactive, biological, inorganic, volatile organic, or synthetic organic contaminants. The table below shows only those contaminants that were detected in the water. The state allows us to monitor for certain substances less than once per year because the concentrations of these substances do not change frequently.

In these cases, the most recent sample data are included, along with the year in which the sample was taken.

Tap water samples were collected for lead and copper analyses from sample sites throughout the community. Our next round of lead and copper sampling will be in 2020.

Substance (Unit of Measure)	Year Sampled	Action Level	MCLG	Amount Detected (90th %ile)	# of sites above action level	Violation	Typical Source
Copper (ppm)	7/24/2019	1.3	1.3	.055	0/20	No	Corrosion of household plumbing; Erosion of natural deposits
Lead (ppb)	7/24/2019	15	0	2.0	0/20	No	Corrosion of household plumbing; Erosion of natural deposits; Leaching from wood preservation

#### Definitions:

**90th Percentile:** Out of every 10 homes sampled, 9 were at or below this level.

**AL (Action Level):** The concentration of a contaminant which, if exceeded, triggers treatment or other requirements which a water system must follow.

**MCL (Maximum Contaminant Level):** The highest level of a contaminant that is allowed in drinking water. MCLs are set as close to the MCLGs as feasible using the best available treatment technology.

**MCLG (Maximum Contaminant Level Goal):** The

level of a contaminant in drinking water below which there is no known or expected risk to health. MCLGs allow for a margin of safety.

**MRDL (Maximum Residual Disinfectant Level):** The highest level of a disinfectant allowed in drinking water. There is convincing evidence that addition of a disinfectant is necessary for control of microbial contaminants.

**MRDLG (Maximum Residual Disinfectant Level Goal):** The level of a drinking water disinfectant below which there is no known or expected risk to health. MRDLGs do not reflect the benefits of the use of

disinfectants to control microbial contaminants.

**NA:** Not applicable.

**ND (Not detected):** Indicates that the substance was not found by laboratory analysis.

**ppb (parts per billion):** One part substance per billion parts water (or micrograms per liter).

**ppm (parts per million):** One part substance per million parts water (or milligrams per liter).

**TT (Treatment Technique):** A required process intended to reduce the level of a contaminant in drinking water.



**MONTAGUE** from page A1

including the need for adequate social distancing for both customers and employees. Office capacity of 50% is now allowed, double the previous level.

Ellis then reviewed the plan for opening town hall. The plan requires that visitors enter through the basement back door, fill out a screening form, and have their temperature taken. Visits will be concentrated to between 10:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. and from 3:30 to 5:30 p.m. to leave the staff time to "sanitize all the high-touch common areas in between..." All public service areas have stands that allow for plexiglass barriers, and both visitors and employees must wear masks. The public is encouraged to make appointments, although walk-ins will be allowed; each department may have only one visitor at a time.

Council on Aging director Roberta Potter sent the board a memo stating the senior center will not be open in the near future, but listing the services that the agency will be providing. These include "telephone checks" with regular senior center and food bank participants; three food distribution services; book, puzzle and craft supply delivery; and information and referrals for Medicare, Social Security, fuel assistance, and wood bank access.

As far as reopening the senior center itself, Ellis said that the decision would require the "greatest caution" even if opening is allowed by the state.

The board discussed the need for continued joint meetings with the board of health and finance committee. "I think these are beneficial," Kuklewicz said, but he recommended putting COVID-19 items at the top of the agenda "so the board of health can drop off."

Health board chair Al Cummings asked whether the town needed the joint meetings, since "we are going into Phase 3 in a week, I hope."

Emergency manager John Zellman said the town would still need weekly COVID-19 updates. "It's coming back," he said. "I know it's coming back. I just have that kind of feeling." Michael Nelson nodded in agreement. Kuklewicz suggested that the two boards continue meeting jointly while they still held virtual meetings on Zoom.

Nelson then asked whether the board would start "meeting in person." He said he would "defer to the emergency management team to come up with a plan" for future meetings. Other board members agreed, though no vote was taken.

Ellis was asked whether the park and playgrounds reopening begun the previous week, which involved cleaning playground structures, had gone smoothly. He said he had received a report from parks director Jon Dobosz, and that the department "would not have reopened the facilities if they were unable to implement the plan." Dobosz also told Ellis that he had not seen "ongoing significant issues regarding people's conduct at the skatepark or in the basketball court area."

**Police Review Committee**

Deborah Huisken of Montague Center asked about the committee the town is forming to review police department policies in light of the recent Black Lives Matter protests.

Ellis said he had been talking with Paula Green of the Karuna Center for Peace, whom he called a "facilitator of processes." He said Green would be providing training for town staff "to make sure we are prepared for a community engagement process focused on listening and productive engagement," and recommending some "best practices."

"We have to think about the focus, the process and the people," he said, noting that there have been a number of applications for the committee. He said the town was reaching out to "some people who might

be closely connected with communities that may not be as aware of the opportunity to contribute through a committee."

Ellis said he thought the process may begin with "a short set of goals, working to accomplish some concrete things," but that "the conversation could be expansive and very well long-term." He said he hoped to get recommendations to the selectboard by Thursday so there could be a "robust conversation" at next Monday's meeting.

**Other Business**

After a long discussion of purchasing tablets for board members, to reduce Xeroxing and to separate board business from personal business, the board decided not to make the purchases.

The board approved a proposal from town planner Walter Ramsey to authorize the planning department to apply for another round of state Complete Streets grants. The grants, which total \$390,284, will fund sidewalk improvements on Keith Street, Montague Street, and Turners Falls Road.

Also at Ramsey's request, the board authorized an amendment to the design contract funding a "geotechnical analysis" of the new location of the Fifth Street bridge. The bridge is being moved to the southwest side of the current vehicle bridge, which is owned by the state.

Ellis reported on the progress of a number of key capital projects, including the public works facility on Turnpike Road and the General Pierce Bridge, which will be reconstructed by the state. The selectboard held a hearing for the construction of a new telephone pole on Millers Falls Road, and authorized the hiring of a new truck driver/laborer named Lance Harmon by the department of public works.

The next scheduled selectboard meeting will be on Monday, June 29.



**NOTES FROM THE ERVING SELECTBOARD**

**Erving Keeps Town Offices Closed; Questions Sludge; Reviews Logos**

By **KATIE NOLAN**

On Monday night the Erving selectboard decided that offices at town hall, closed to the public since March because of the COVID-19 emergency, will remain closed for the time being, even though Governor Baker has announced a phased re-opening for offices in Massachusetts.

Selectboard chair Jacob Smith said he was "not in a rush" to open up the building because citizens have been able to conduct business with the town by using a document dropbox, communicating by email or phone, and by using the town website. Selectboard member William Bembury concurred, saying, "I'm on board with continuing to move slowly."

Starting next week, town administrator Bryan Smith said that people will be able to use a walkup window to contact town hall employees. The window will be staffed for two hours, two days a week. Days and times will be posted on the town website.

The board and the finance committee will meet jointly on June 30 to discuss the purchase of a sludge dryer for POTW#2. The town-owned wastewater treatment plant is operated by ERSECO, a subsidi-

ary of Erving Industries, Inc. At the June 8 meeting, Erving Industries CEO Morris Housen proposed installing a sludge dryer costing an estimated \$5 to \$13 million at the plant. As owner of POTW#2, the town would apply for a low-cost loan from the Massachusetts Clean Water Trust to fund the dryer.

On Monday, Bembury said he would like to know "what the return is, for our residents and the town."

Bryan Smith said that the Franklin County Solid Waste District staff cautioned that drying the sludge could concentrate chemicals in the sludge and result in creating a more toxic substance.

Jacob Smith said that, while the board "is trying to be collaborative about this," the town needs to understand the financial implications of the project better.

The board approved continued work on an application to National Grid's electric vehicle charging station program. The application will propose installing three dual-port chargers at the municipal lot near Arch Street. The National Grid incentive program will pay up to 75% of the cost of their installation, with the town's cost, after the incentive, at approximately \$2,500 per station.

At the request of new owners of

the property at 143 Old State Road, the board clarified the language defining "agricultural uses" in the property's conservation restriction. In a letter to the board, the owners wrote that they wanted to grow food for home consumption, raise livestock, reclaim pasture, and sell blueberries and maple products. The new definition will be filed as an addendum to the conservation restriction, which is held by the town.

Planning assistant Mariah Kurtz presented four draft "Town of Erving" logos, developed by Tiny Town Marketing of Orange. Each of the four draft logos included a graphic of the French King Bridge. Several included mountains and trees.

However, the board members said that the mountains looked too much like western mountains, and not like rolling New England hills. They commented on colors (earth tones were favored), fonts, and banner placement.

Kurtz said she would provide the comments to Tiny Town and present revised draft logos at a future meeting.

Bryan Smith reported that the hazardous materials and asbestos cleanup at the former International Paper Mill is expected to be completed by June 30.



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**LOOKING BACK:  
10 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK**

*Here's the way it was June 24, 2010: News from the Montague Reporter's archive.*

**GMRSC Stands By Its Budget**

By a vote of 6-1, the Gill-Montague school committee voted Tuesday to reaffirm their FY'11 operating budget of \$16,408,162. With members Kristine Boyle and Emily Monosson absent, Michael Langknecht cast the only dissenting vote.

The vote came one day after the Gill town meeting unanimously approved their \$1,729,624 share of the G-M budget, and three weeks after Montague town meeting voted down their \$7,616,878 assessment.

The school committee agreed it would be fiscally irresponsible to cut the budget further, or to dip further into the school's excess and deficiency fund, which serves as a hedge against unpredictable expense increases or further cuts in state aid.

At the meeting Tuesday night, superintendent Carl Ladd offered the school committee three options: vote to maintain the current budget, which Montague has rejected; attempt to compromise with Montague at a halfway figure, proposed by a group of town meeting members, by cutting \$200,000 from Montague's assessment; or make up the entire difference between the assessment the district asked for and the \$7,230,327 Montague approved at town meeting.

**Gill Town Meeting Approves More Police Coverage**

Thomas Mortimer IV, the suspect in the grisly Winchester quadruple homicide of his mother-in-law, wife, and children – arrested last Thursday in Bernardston after reportedly spending the previous night on the Montague Plains – was on the minds of town meeting voters as they discussed the level of police staffing needed to keep the town of Gill safe.

Timmie Smith, who lives on West Gill Road, asked the meeting to consider how Mortimer traveled from Montague to Bernardston, a route that may well have taken him through Gill.

And Ernie Hastings, father of Gill police chief David Hastings, pointed out that state troopers were seen traveling up and down West Gill Road that day, apparent-

ly searching for Parmenter Road, where Bernardston police chief James Palmieri, out on routine patrol with his town's 89-year-old dog officer, nabbed Mortimer on Thursday afternoon.

But finance committee chair Tupper Brown, arguing against approval of \$14,356 to supplement \$15,633 previously appropriated for reserve officers' salaries, said the additional sum would amount to enough part-time hours to cover a third full-time officer for the force.

Brown said he has been trying for two years to get detailed records of police coverage and call volume in Gill, but is still unclear on the inner workings of the department. He said Chief Hastings told the fin com recently that he is "called out on average three times a month."

Fin com member Alden Booth backed up Brown, saying, "It's been hard to figure out what do we get for our money."

But Deb Loomer said it was important for Gill to be able to reciprocate on mutual-support calls with neighboring towns, and attributed the low call volume in town to effective "deterrence."

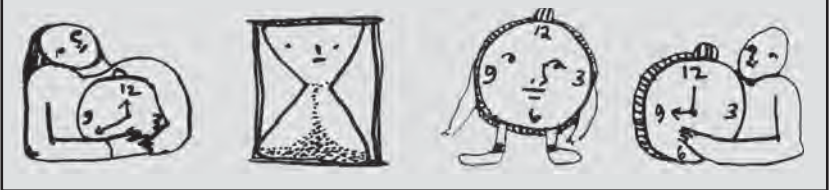
The majority of voters agreed with her, approving the extra money, 44 to 18.

**Arson Fires on Hillside Road**

"There's nothing for the public to be alarmed about," said detective Brian Dobosz, about the arson fires that were set at a Hillside Road home on the night of June 16. "There isn't some wacko going around starting fires. This appears to be something directed at these people. Why, I don't know."

According to fire chief Ray Godin, the call came in from the home at about 11:05 p.m. last Wednesday, and by the time the fire department responded, "Essentially, the fires were out. We found evidence three separate fires had been set surrounding the building. One of the building occupants woke up to the sound of fire alarms going off."

Trooper Gerald Perwak of the state fire marshal's office confirmed the fires on Hillside Road were arson, and said a reward "up to \$5,000 for information leading up to the arrest and conviction of the perpetrator or perpetrators in connection with the fire," has been offered.



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# Wendell Town Meeting Outdoors This Saturday

By JOSH HEINEMANN

Wendell will hold its annual town meeting on the town's south common this Saturday, June 27 at 10 a.m., with accommodations designed to reduce the likelihood of COVID-19 passing from one person to others.

Seating will be separated, and some of the warrant will be consolidated into a consent agenda, with routine articles and regular required expenditures that need no discussion voted together with the intention of keeping the meeting short. The warrant and the budget are posted on the town website so citizens who can get an internet connection will know the issues ahead of time.

A \$403,345 cost for broadband, **Article 6**, will be funded by subscriber fees, and neither raised and appropriated nor taken from

stabilization.

The total town budget includes \$3,513,657 in expenditures. \$100,000 is proposed to be spent from the stabilization account to reduce the tax rate, and another \$101,686 between the reserve fund, an independent audit, group health insurance, tax title expenses, fire department turnout gear, town building maintenance, and sick bank stabilization fund.

The stabilization account would then be replenished with \$255,452 in free cash.

**Article 22** would raise the income allowances and reduce the interest rate from 8% to 4.5% for property taxes that are deferred as allowed by state law.

**Article 23** would impose a year-long moratorium on marijuana growing, selling, and processing to allow the planning board time to update the zoning bylaws.

GMRSD from page A1

members thanked him for his work.

Business manager Joanne Blier said she had heard the state may not pass a budget until September, and would hopefully approve Gill-Montague's application for a 1/12 budget arrangement by July 1.

The state Department of Elementary and Secondary Education had not yet issued its guidance for fall reopening. The district is forming a "stakeholders' group" to make decisions about fall pandemic planning more nimbly than the school committee.

Three vans are continuing to deliver free food to local youth, who do not need to be enrolled in district schools.

Sullivan shared the results of a parent feedback survey on distanced learning this spring, which will inform the fall plan. "They were very understanding of the situation," he

said. "A lot of families commented that they would have appreciated more physical artifacts, or references or tools, to be provided, besides just online learning."

A similar survey of staff has not yet been compiled.

The school committee reviewed, but did not approve, an antiracism statement originally drafted by Montague member Haley Anderson. Langknecht said he was concerned the term "white privilege" was misunderstood, and may create "pushback." He suggested alternate wording about historic exploitation by "the dominant culture," which other members suggested was also tricky.

Teacher's union head Karl Dziura commented that he felt the idea of white privilege was "extremely important" to retain.

The committee agreed to allow time for more wordsmithing.



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Virtual Campers will also benefit from smaller break-out sessions with Black Rocket coaches and from ongoing access to Black Rocket's Creator Corps™ community, which offers access to games, challenges, and the 2020 International STEAM Competition.

Tuition starts at \$149 and varies by course.



Damkoehler made a request that "equity among schools" be put on a future agenda. "We've been speaking so much about equity in education," she said, before pointing out that intra-district choice to Gill, a smaller school apparently producing better educational outcomes than Sheffield, favors students whose parents have access to a car, fill out an application, and advocate for their needs.

"There's a level of privilege that comes with school choice," she said. "Often times, unfortunately, when there's a lack of privilege, there's also higher needs." "Gill and Sheffield tend to be apples and oranges, compared to each other," Damkoehler said. "It became more apparent to me during this school closure, and how it was handled." The committee unanimously vot-

ed to endorse a statement shared by Sullivan lobbying for state funding to match any pandemic-related expenses in the fall. They approved a temporary nurse position until the beginning of the school year, and increased the stipend for the elementary team leader. The school committee's next scheduled meetings are on July 24 and 28 and August 11 and 25.

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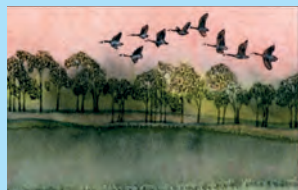


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JUNE 25, 2020



## WEST ALONG THE RIVER PLEDGE ALLEGIANCE TO TURTLE ISLAND

By DAVID BRULE

**ERVINGSIDE** – Two gentlemen poets dropped in on me the other morning. All I needed to do was open a book. I was sitting in my little apple tree bower, contemplating the ruckus in the cherry tree. Up near the top of the tree orioles were busy chugging down half-ripened cherries that are too high for me to harvest anyway, so I'm not fretting about sharing. The Baltimore orioles are plentiful this year as everyone has said, it's good to know something is going right in the avian world.

So like I was saying, myself, Gary Snyder and Wendell Berry got into talking about the current state of affairs in the country, and mulling over the upcoming Fourth of July. We agreed that sometimes this country can drive you crazy. Snyder started it all, rattling off the lines of a poem he wrote:

*I pledge allegiance to the soil  
of Turtle Island,  
and to the beings who thereon  
dwell  
one ecosystem  
in diversity  
under the sun  
With joyful interpenetration  
for all.*

Now, I like where this line of thought is going to go. Some of us see a continent sprawled out before us, all the fateful Manifest Destiny of it, land full of possibilities, full of industry, and full of ways to make money.

Some of us on the other hand, see Turtle Island.

Not everyone quite understands this concept, so I'll try to summarize this beautiful creation story here, and we'll take up the details and implications at some future point. For now, let's just say that our Algonquian cousins tell us that there was a time when there was nothing here but water. That is, until Skywoman began her fall towards our spinning globe. She

was falling, falling towards a watery grave, when the wild geese and swans flew up to catch her and bring her down, safely, to land on the back of a huge sea turtle.

Now, of course, that shell was hard and bare, but those earliest creatures knew what to do. Someone had to dive down deep to find some mud at the bottom of this vast expanse. Several of the strongest creatures tried, but no one could reach the bottom. Many died trying.

Then the muskrat said that he would like to try, but the others were skeptical. How could such a small being like himself succeed where the others had failed? Yet down he went and after a long deep dive, he rose to the surface with a ball of mud clutched in his paws. The other creatures took the mud from his lifeless body afloat on the water, and placed it on the back of the turtle, at the feet of Skywoman. We are reminded to be kind to small brother muskrat, *muskquash*, for the gift he provided Skywoman.

She began to dance, and that mud grew larger and larger the more she danced, and all the wild creatures danced with her, until a large expanse of earth was solid enough for Skywoman to plant the trees and grasses she had clutched at the beginning of her fall.

That, by the way, is why we dance, to remember the gift of Skywoman, *muskquash*, and the creatures who helped her build this earth we inhabit, and which sadly we are now destroying. Indigenous teachings of balance and reciprocity with wild things could teach us how to restore that balance, or is it too late?

There is a lot to this story, and that will be for another time. We will note however, that the wild creatures helped Skywoman, they shared in the creation of our world. Take a minute to contrast this story with the Biblical version of Eve. It is so contradictory to the creation story of Skywoman.

We are told that Eve came from see **WEST ALONG** page B4

LOUIS AGASSIZ FUERTES ILLUSTRATION



Baltimore oriole (*Icterus galbula*).

## Insulin, an Anticancer Drug – and the Rosy Periwinkle

By EMILY MONOSSON

**MONTAGUE** – Sometimes discoveries are made when you are looking for something else. I was searching through scientific journals for some history of chemotherapy and rosy periwinkle, when my husband Ben's grandfather – James D. Havens – popped up.

Ben never met his grandfather, but our walls are covered with his intricate and colorful woodcuts and watercolors. James Havens was both an artist and the first American treated with insulin in the United States. I knew this, but hadn't expected to find a connection while reading up on plants and chemotherapy.

Stories of discovery are also seldom a straight shot. In this case, the history of *vincristine* and *vinblastine*, some of the first effective anticancer drugs isolated from a plant, began with diabetes.

Robert Noble, who is credited with the discovery, was looking for an oral alternative to injectable insulin. When taken orally the hormone is digested, and becomes ineffective. The Madagascar (rosy) periwinkle, a plant reminiscent of the purple periwinkle many of us use for ground cover, was one candidate. At the time he was working with James Collip, the scientist who decades earlier isolated the insulin that saved James Havens' life.

Havens was around 15 when his pancreas stopped making the hormone that enables cells to use sugar for fuel. When cells starve for lack of sugar, the body begins burning fat. Burning fat produces ketones, and if a body produces large amounts, the blood can become dangerously acidic. So not only did his body begin to consume itself, but the high levels of ketones had him on the verge of lapsing into a coma.

In the early 1900s, when Havens was diagnosed, the only treatment was essentially controlled starvation. Five years later, subsisting on a diet of 200 calories a day, the 5'8" twenty-year-old weighed in at 85 pounds. By May 1920 his father wrote to a friend that he had become a mere shadow.

Just to the north of Havens' home town of Rochester,



Scientists explored using extracts from this plant, the Madagascar periwinkle, to treat diabetes, and instead found help for cancer patients. (Illustration from Frederick Warne & Co., *Favourite Flowers of Garden and Greenhouse*, 1897.)

New York, scientists in Toronto, Canada, were working on a cure for diabetes. They discovered that pancreatic secretions collected from animals could stave off diabetes in other animals.

But the secretions were essentially a soup of hormones and proteins and other chemicals – too crude a mixture to risk injecting into humans without serious side effects. Collip, a biochemist, figured out how to make a cleaner, safer preparation. In January 1922,

see **INSULIN** page B4

### THE GARDENER'S COMPANION

## Summer Solstice



By LESLIE BROWN

**MONTAGUE CITY** – The longest day has already passed. June 20 marked the summer solstice.

The cat is in; the cat is out. She loves the long days and has to be dragged in when it gets dark.

When I was eight we lived in a very suburban neighborhood outside of Chicago called Libertyville. My father wrote text for Coronet Films, and dreamed of being a writer.

Before I finished my third grade there, we moved to Jamaica, Vermont. I was fortunate enough to attend the final part of my third grade year in the last year of Jamaica's one-room schoolhouse. The next year the new elementary school opened. My

dad spent that year as a freelance writer and sold nothing except the charming story of a mouse named Beaumarchais. Then we moved to Keene, where my dad worked toward a degree in teaching, and my mom taught French in Alstead schools to keep the family afloat.

Moving and changing schools is a challenge, as anyone who has done it knows well. I was briefly popular in the sixth grade when I said I came from Jamaica, but this lasted less than five minutes when it became clear which Jamaica I meant.

I grew up quickly, as I became a summer babysitter for my sister, who is five years younger. My parents were hired at Northfield Mount Hermon, and we moved once more. This move allowed me to attend this private school for my high school years, which brought me the opportunity for a fine education, despite my new title as a "faculty brat."

At last, while attending college in Vermont, I started to make my own

path. I wrote for the school literary magazine, made friends with some Beat writers and singers, and got a good education. I also met a black woman who became my best friend.

I furthered my education when she told me after we finished our junior year that she was leaving the school.

I asked her why, and she replied, "You wouldn't understand."

This hurt me terribly, but I think I am just beginning to understand it now.

I cannot totally understand what being a person of color really means, but I can listen to what is said in today's world. Listening is the main thing. Truly hearing what is said. Responding in the most open way we can.

I cannot be you, and you cannot be me, but we can hear what we say about what it means to be each of us. That is probably about as close as we can get.

Hopefully, that will be enough.



# Pet of the Week



## “GALAVANT”

Galavant is one cat of a group of five that fell on hard times when their guardian passed away. They were not being fed cat food for an unknown amount of time, and had no access to litter boxes. As a result of their poor nutrition they have developed vision loss and other conditions.

Due to his limited vision, Galavant will need a home with structure and guidance. We require that he has a helper cat in the home – either a resident cat or one of his current bud-

dies – to help build his confidence in a new environment.

If you feel that you can meet the needs of one or more of these cats, give Dakin a call! Animals at Dakin are available for adoption by appointment only. Please call (413) 781-4000, or see [www.dakin humane.org](http://www.dakin humane.org), for more information.



## BOOK REVIEW

### Wendy Mass, *A Mango-Shaped Space* (2003)

By LIZZY POLATIN

**GILL** – Hi, I’m Lizzy Polatin, and I’m 12 years old.

Because of all this time at home, I have been rereading some of my favorite books. One of these books is a realistic fiction story called *A Mango-Shaped Space* by Wendy Mass.

*A Mango-Shaped Space* is about a girl named Mia who has a big secret: a secret no one else knows. Mia has synesthesia.

Synesthesia is a condition in which senses are connected, meaning that you can see, hear, and taste colors, whereas a person without synesthesia can’t. Mia can see colors when, for example, she hears a certain sound, or sees a number or letter.

Mia has kept this secret successfully for years, but when Math class gets too difficult because of her condition, she tells her parents, who find out that she has synesthesia. But then, when an emotional disaster hits Mia and her colors are suddenly gone, she battles

sadness, grief, and anger at her family and the world.

I find this book amazing because the author, Wendy Mass, packs so many completely out-of-the-blue things and makes them fit together perfectly into an exciting story. In the beginning of it, Mia just wants to be a normal 13-year-old without synesthesia, but by the end she is proud to be different and she has learned that being different is a gift.

Mass puts friendship, sadness, comedy, and so much more into one story.

*A Mango-Shaped Space* also has unique and interesting characters with detailed backstories that are each completely different. The dynamics between each and every one of them are incredibly interesting



to read, and very relatable. For example, Mia and her cat Mango met in not the most normal circumstance or place – specifically, in a graveyard, while Mia’s grandfather was being buried. The moment Mia sees Mango she decides that part of her grandfather’s soul resides in Mango.

I would recommend this book to anyone who likes to read, but if

you’re more of an advanced reader, this will most likely be on the easier side. Still I would say it’s entirely worth it.

This book is important because it teaches you to embrace being different, and that you shouldn’t be ashamed about who you are. Just be you!

Other books you might enjoy by Wendy Mass are *The Candymakers* series and *Jeremy Fink and the Meaning of Life*.



## Sex Matters

a sex-positive health column

by STEPHANIE BAIRD

Two sexuality-related aspects of the pandemic have been brought to my attention. One is deeply thoughtful, the other somewhat light-hearted.

The deep aspect concerns how we communicate our wishes about sexual activity as we age and/or possibly become incapacitated in some way. The other feature concerns how we responsibly dispose of or recycle our unwanted sex toys – or those of our deceased relatives. An inquiring mind tipped me off to that last question, bringing me a much-needed dark chuckle in this difficult time.

Let me address the tougher topic first.

I recently co-facilitated an older adult sex education Zoom class on “Family Matters” as part of the Our Whole Lives curriculum. One of the topics in this class was about creating a “Loving Will,” as developed by Amanda Smith Barusch. I had never heard of this idea before, and found Barusch’s idea to be brilliant.

As we age, we all hopefully take the time to write our last will and testament, getting these documents notarized and filed to alleviate the headaches of those we leave in our wake. We can also create a Loving Will filled with articulations of our sexual needs as we age, to help guide our loved ones in future decisions. This can be a simple written or typed document that clearly tells family and loved ones our sexual wishes in the event we can no longer clearly communicate consent or make informed decisions.

This document can also help us express our hopes about our future sexual selves. To be clear, this is not considered a legally-binding document, but more of a guideline. This may be especially relevant if you end up in a nursing home or other assisted living situation, particularly if you have a partner you want to continue intimacy with.

In the recent past, nursing home staff may have separated spouses or partners and forbidden sexual activity. This document would help to clarify that you and your partner would indeed like to continue enjoying private sexual activity. This document can also be helpful if you are single later in life, and wish to continue enjoying sexual time with yourself privately, or wish to remain open to sexual activity with potential partners.

As you create this document you can use language such as “I, \_\_\_\_\_, reserve the right to enjoy sexual relationships with \_\_\_\_\_ even if I lose my ability to speak, move independently,” and so on. You can also designate a Loving Will proxy, someone who knows your wishes and can advocate for you, and indicate what can be considered consent: a verbal yes, a nod, or a thumbs up, for example. Obviously you can edit and modify your loving will at any point.

Hopefully we can all avoid COVID-19 and anticipate a very very slow decline, enjoying comforting and stimulating relationships as long as we wish. Yet it’s never too early to plan and consider these possibilities. The Loving Will is largely a document for our primary partner or remaining adult children or other family members, giving them some direction and guidance about our preferred sexual activity wishes towards the end of our lives.

Now, for some brevity. What to do about all the old Hitachi Magic Wands, Pocket Pussies, and Rabbit Ears laying around? Maybe your sex toy went completely kaput the thousandth time you used it, and no amount of fresh batteries made a difference. Maybe your 20-year-old Magic Wand workhorse developed a very loud motor sound, ruining the mood one too many times, so you had to break down and order a new quieter one. (I wouldn’t know

anything about that...!)

Well, I’ve done the Googling for you: [sextoyrecycling.com](http://sextoyrecycling.com) has come to the rescue to help you help the planet!

Their process looks pretty simple: simply email them to receive a Tyvek pouch. Wash your toy with soap and water before putting it in the pouch, then drop it in the mail. Once the facility receives it, they sterilize and inspect it, then sort it according to the material it is made from. Some toys are repaired, and will be sold as “refurbished.” They will recycle the metals, plastics, and other materials for “non-sex toy purposes,” and use a patent-pending process to remold the remaining silicone and rubber into new toys made from “95% post-consumer materials.” As an added bonus for helping the planet, you receive \$5 credit towards the purchase of any recycled toy. This company does all their work here in the US, supporting American labor.

The company also offers some additional tips on “going green” with your sexual pleasure. They recommend glass or metal toys over rubber ones, organic lubes and massage oils over petroleum derivatives, wooden paddles over plastic, natural fiber lingerie or fetish wear over synthetic materials, and the use of rechargeable batteries when possible. Lastly, they offer a nice section on DIY toys if you are in a pinch. Go ahead, grab that good-looking cuke you just grew, or use that electric toothbrush you’ve been curious about.

Now you’ve got two more (hopefully fun) tasks to add to your COVID-19 quarantine to-do list: work on your Loving Will, and recycle some old sex toys laying about!

*Stephanie Baird is a certified OWL facilitator and an EMDR psychotherapist and consultant who encourages her clients towards thriving sexual health. She welcomes feedback and suggestions at [sexmatters@montaguereporter.org](mailto:sexmatters@montaguereporter.org).*

## Senior Center Activities JUNE 29 to JULY 10

### GILL and MONTAGUE

The Gill Montague Senior Center is closed and will reopen when advised by state and local authorities that it is safe to do so. This measure is taken not lightly but with the utmost concern for the most vulnerable in our community.

The Council on Aging staff will be available for referrals and information from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., Mondays through Thursdays, at (413) 863-9357 by telephone, and [coa@montague-ma.gov](mailto:coa@montague-ma.gov) by email.

### ERVING

Erving Senior Center director Paula Betters writes that the Center is closed until further notice:

“All programs are canceled or postponed. With that said, I will be here or at least checking my messages daily. I want anyone to call me and leave a message if they have any questions or concerns regarding food or other services. I

will call them back and if we can help with services of any kind we will do so. I am working with other agencies so we can be sure to keep our seniors healthy & safe.”

Paula can be reached at (413) 423-3649 or [paula-betters@erving-ma.gov](mailto:paula-betters@erving-ma.gov).

### LEVERETT

Leverett senior activities are currently canceled. Further updates are being distributed via TTY telephone and email. For more information, contact the Leverett COA at (413) 548-1022 x 5, or [coa@leverett.ma.us](mailto:coa@leverett.ma.us).

### WENDELL

Wendell senior activities have been canceled. The Wendell Senior Center is closed. The Senior Health Rides program is also suspended until advisories change. For more information, call Nancy Spittle at (978) 544-6760.

## Local Supermarket Senior Accommodations

Supermarkets in Massachusetts are now required to provide special hours for seniors and immunocompromised shoppers. Call ahead – this information is accurate as of April 8; hours and accommodations are still changing.

**Big Y:** Senior hours from 7 to 8 a.m. (413) 772-0435  
**Foster’s:** Senior hours from 7 to 8 a.m. (413) 773-1100  
**Food City:** Senior hours from 7 to 8 a.m. (413) 863-9591

**Green Fields Market:** Senior hours from 9 to 10 a.m. Curbside pickup available. Order by 8 p.m.; order ready for pickup between 1 and 6 the following day. Delivery also available. \$6 per delivery inside Greenfield. \$8 outside Greenfield. (413) 773-9567

**McCusker’s Market:** Only six customers allowed in store at a time. Curbside pickup available. Order between 12 and 1 p.m. for pickup the following day. Delivery available. \$10 per delivery. Email [pickup@franklincommunity.coop](mailto:pickup@franklincommunity.coop) (413) 625-2548

**Stop and Shop:** Senior hours from 6 to 7:30 a.m. (413) 774-6096

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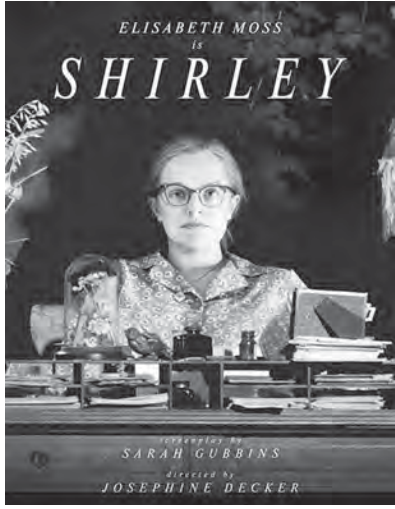
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MOVIE REVIEW

# Shirley (2020)

By SEAMUS TURNER-GLENNON



**CHARLEMONT** – When it comes to well-known *auteur* directors acting as producers, there’s a very particular way in which they tend to operate. Quentin Tarantino, with the exception of a handful of 1990s dark crime comedies with names like *Curdled* and *Killing Zoe*, pretty much exclusively produces his own films and those of his buddy Robert Rodriguez. Brian De Palma has production credits on four films: all his own.

Martin Scorsese, however, is not like this at all. The legendary crime film director has managed to make himself something of an established producer in his own right, rather than just a director who sometimes produces. He’s had producer credits on films ranging from 2019’s widely acclaimed *Uncut Gems* to 2017’s widely panned *The Snowman*, to his latest production effort, 2020’s *Shirley*.

Scorsese is, however, just a producer here. The real star of the show creatively, in relation to *Shirley*, is director Josephine Decker. Prior to her latest effort, Decker’s career has been something of an odd one: her first feature film was 2008’s *Bi The Way*, a mind-numbingly dull documentary on bisexuality, the ultimate thesis of which seems to consist of “there are people, and they are bisexual, and that is all.”

*Bi The Way* was her first and only venture into the world of documentary filmmaking. Post *Bi The Way*, her career has consisted of making so-called “experimental thriller films” with names like *Thou Wast Mild and Lovely* – movies in which the “experimentation” derives from having characters have sex with one another, centering around premises scary only to dull arthouse audiences such as, “What if a person was mean to another person?”

Now, that is most likely a bit needlessly harsh – her 2013 effort *Butter on the Latch* is a legitimately well-crafted thriller film, in spite of its godawful title – but the point still stands. And if these are the symptoms of her prior efforts, *Shirley* just

might be the very germ itself.

Many aspects of *Shirley* are well-made, well-written, and well-acted – in particular Elisabeth Moss’s performance as the titular character, author Shirley Jackson. But the film falls flat in a way which serves greatly to its detriment: namely, it becomes so caught up in its desire to create suspense – to be not simply a biopic but a capital-T Thriller – that it very quickly loses sight of how to truly craft an effective psychological thriller.

The film is spoken exclusively in half-hushed, half-yelled, anxious dialogue; a relentlessly tense score backtracks scenes of Jackson hallucinating images of horrific gore and violence; a plot surrounding the disappearance of a young college student is woven throughout. And yes, all those things may create momentary tension.

But what they don’t do, and this is the main capacity in which Decker fails as a director, is create a meaningful whole.

The great works of the psychological thriller and psychological horror of every style, no matter how disparate their plots may be, share one thing in common: the whole narrative serves as one increasingly building wave of tension that gradually grows over the course of the film, novel, etc. Decker, unfortunately, doesn’t seem to understand this; instead, her concept of effectively creating tension is to jam as many sequences of tension or horror into her narrative as she can, no matter how *non-sequitur* they may be.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE MONTAGUE POLICE LOG

## Assault At Grocery Store Plaza; Injured Bear; Huge Milk Snake; Smoking Mulch; Racial Slurs

**Monday, 6/15**

7:06 a.m. First of seven reports of breaking and entering into vehicles: three on Dell Street, one on Coolidge Avenue, two on Walnut Street, and one on Turnpike Road. One vehicle’s window smashed with a shovel. Items stolen include a purse, cash, a laptop, and other items. One caller has two subjects on surveillance going through a vehicle at 3:42 a.m. Reports taken.

11:07 p.m. Caller at Food City states that he was jumped by four people, one of whom had a gun and struck him in the back of the head; states he has a welt on his head and is bleeding. Unable to get description of assailants, but caller did state he was told they would be at an address on Fourth Street if he wants to fight. Officers dispatched; AMR contacted. MPD and two MSP officers out at building on Fourth Street. All units clear; spoke to a male and female who loosely fit description, but nothing concrete.

**Tuesday, 6/16**

12:45 p.m. Employee from Greenfield Savings Bank reporting that a customer’s debit card was stolen and used at ATMs in Montague. Report taken.

8:16 p.m. Report from Dry Hill Road of bear with injured left hind leg. Environmental Police contacted; state that for now, they will let nature take its course and that they do not grant permission for residents to dispatch animals on their own unless animal is on the ground and immobile. Caller advised to contact Environmental Police if it looks like bear needs to be dispatched.

8:48 p.m. Caller requesting assistance with un-

locking gate at the tech school; states she was watching planes take off and was locked in. Services rendered.

10 p.m. Caller from Coolidge Avenue reporting that a male party was looking in and knocking on the window of her daughter’s bedroom approximately seven minutes ago. Caller states she went outside with a flashlight to try and locate the party, but he was gone by the time she made it outside. K9 deployed to attempt to locate party. Unable to locate at this time. Caller told officer that earlier today there was a suspicious white SUV driving around that she believes might be linked to the party who was looking in her daughter’s window.

**Wednesday, 6/17**

12:28 a.m. 911 misdial; caller states he is camping out behind Stop & Shop and was trying to change the volume on his Bluetooth headphones. Multiple people on scene stated there was no emergency. Greenfield PD notified.

5:55 a.m. Caller from L Street states that her car was hit sometime during the night. Report taken.

**Thursday, 6/18**

8:20 a.m. Report of loose pregnant dog wandering around caller’s property on South Prospect Street; caller advises she has workers there power-washing her house and is concerned that with the dog wandering around a worker could get hurt. Delay due to ACO call volume; he will check area and follow up.

2:06 p.m. Caller from Main Street reporting a six to seven foot long snake in a tree in his yard. Contacted Environmental Police dispatch, who advised it is likely a milk snake which is not venomous and should not be a hazard.

2:40 p.m. Report of smoke coming from mulch pit under the FL Roberts sign on Third Street. TFFD responding.

5:33 p.m. Report of hit and run on Third Street; caller states she was rear-ended and that the male party who hit her got very aggressive with her. Officer reports no damage to caller’s vehicle; caller declined medical attention but will get checked out at another time. Officer made contact with male party, who reports no damage to his vehicle and states that he has a witness whose information he will provide to the officer tomorrow.

6:44 p.m. Report of suspicious white SUV driving in circles around Coolidge and Vladish avenues. Officer confirmed that driver lives in area of that neighborhood.

8:41 p.m. Several reports of very loud bangs in Randall Wood Drive/Greenfield Road area. Area checked; all quiet.

8:49 p.m. FL Roberts employee requesting that an officer remove a party for loitering and asking people entering and leaving the store for cigarettes and money. Officer advised.

10:07 p.m. Caller from Vladish Avenue reporting that nearby residents are using a saw and it is preventing their children from being able to sleep. Caller advises this is an ongoing issue and that when they attempted to cordially get the party to stop using the saw in the past, the man told the caller not to talk to him and to get away from him. Officer reports that it was a band saw and the owner will be putting it away for the night.

**Friday, 6/19**

12:32 a.m. Caller reporting that the mulch is burning on the Third Street side of FL Roberts; stated he was going to go put a bucket of water on it and hung up. TFFD advised and on scene; area wet down.

1:18 a.m. Caller at Papermill requesting help with a lockout. Advised caller we are not doing them at this time, but Rau’s will. Caller stated he will figure something out.

4:54 a.m. Caller from Dry Hill Road states that there is a bear on her back porch. Caller is concerned that bear may be injured; it keeps coming back to her house every night, and this morning it is on the back porch and not moving. Spoke with EPO dispatch. Caller called back stating that the bear left her porch and went toward the woods.

12:18 p.m. Resident from Greenfield Road reporting past incident where a bear had been in his garage and

appears to have rummaged around. Bear no longer there; caller not sure exactly how long ago this happened. Provided number for EPO dispatch.

5:48 p.m. Report of verbal argument between a male and two female parties on East Mineral Road. Erving PD off with female parties; officer spoke with male party, who stated that the two female parties assaulted him but he does not want to press charges at this time.

7:01 p.m. Report of seven or eight raccoon babies without their mother on Greenfield Road. All officers on a call. Message left for ACO.

**Saturday, 6/20**

8:38 p.m. 911 caller reporting hearing a male party yelling somewhere near his home on Main Street. Racial slurs could be heard. Area checked; nothing found.

**Sunday, 6/21**

12:43 a.m. Caller from Millers Falls Road reports that there is a male party outside his window; unable to give description but could smell party’s cigarette. Investigated.

5:01 p.m. Caller from Keith Apartments states that it looks like someone tried to move her air conditioner out of the window. Investigated.

6:50 p.m. Caller from Montague Street states that around 10:30 last night she heard a tapping sound on her bedroom window; this morning, she found footprints outside of her and her daughter’s windows. Caller also smelled cigarette smoke and found a Marlboro cigarette butt near her window. Report taken.

7:31 p.m. Family Dollar employee reporting that a man just threw some money at her and then walked out of the store with an item. Male party called in to make sure MPD knew it was him and that he paid for the item; later came to station and stated he wanted the employee charged for making a false police report. Officer advised him that she did not make a false report, since both of their stories matched up. Party got upset, called officer some derogatory names, and left.

Montague Community Television News

## We’ll Edit Your Videos!

By MICHAEL SMITH

Along with most businesses, MCTV encourages people to stay at home and limit visits to the station. Keep an eye on our Facebook page for updated station hours.

One way to connect with your community from the confines of your quarantine is to make videos! It’s easy to film a tutorial, a public service announcement, a story or a hike by using your phone, computer or one of MCTV’s cameras that are sanitized and available for pickup. Any editing

can be done by MCTV staff editors, or you can try it at home!

Residents of Montague can find MCTV on Channel 17, and the MCTV Vimeo page is available online. Email [hannahbrookman@gmail.com](mailto:hannahbrookman@gmail.com) for editing assistance or filmmaking questions.

Something going on you think others would like to see? If you get in touch, we can show you how easy it is to use a camera and capture the moment. Contact us at (413) 863-9200 or [infomontaguetelevision@gmail.com](mailto:infomontaguetelevision@gmail.com) between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m., Monday through Friday. We’d love to work with you!

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**WEST ALONG** from page B1

a man, Adam's rib, and that a creature, the snake was responsible for her downfall. Eve was the source of temptation, guilt, shame, Original Sin, add an apple for more sin, and the first couple was cast out of the Garden of Eden, banished from the natural world for what Snyder would likely call joyful interpenetration!

No wonder our culture is so screwed up. No wonder up until very recently woman has been kept in an inferior status. We should come back to talk about Eve and Skywoman in the future. There's a lot to learn.

The full version of the Skywoman's arrival can be found in Robin Wall Kimmerer's book *Braiding Sweetgrass*.

This has put me in the mood of remembering to be Thankful. There is this whole idea of celebrating a different kind of possible Republic. With the sun just coming up at six, I with my invisible poet friends are day-dreaming and imagining in the shade of the old apple bower.

It's a great day to be alive.

It's a cool 60 degrees; soon it'll be 90 in the shade. There's a light dew, and the sunshine is just reaching the top of the Montmorency cherry tree where robins and catbirds are raiding the early crop. I remind myself, they have every right to share the bounty in this newly remembered Republic of Turtle Island.

It just crosses my mind that I've actually been to Montmorency, a bit south of Paris. Didn't pay attention to cherry trees back then though. Just visiting a friend, in a different lifetime, long ago. I'm wondering if some Count of Montmorency or other aristocrat had developed this species of tree sometime before the guillotine took him out of the picture.

I didn't expect any cherries this year. You may remember that I pick this fruit around the Fourth of July every odd-numbered year, and put them up preserved in Stolichnaya vodka. Sometimes Absolut. I'm just finishing the last of my 2017 batch – they've been curing in a mason jar for three years, to be taken out at Christmas time, or for a cool white wine cocktail on a day like today. The 2019 batch has been patiently chilling in the back of the fridge.

Now, with this unexpected 2020 crop shaping up well, the drought should increase and concentrate the

flavor. Maybe this year I'll pickle them in brandy or Irish whiskey?

Wendell Berry clears his throat from over there in the shade, and rattles off some of the amendments that could be part of a new imagining of our founding document:

1. Do every day something that won't compute.
2. Love the world. Love the Lord.
3. Love someone who does not deserve it.
4. Ask the questions that have no answers.
5. Invest in the millennium. Plant sequoias and oaks.
6. Say that your main crop is the forest that you did not plant, that you will not harvest.
7. Say that the leaves are harvested when they have rotted into mold. Call that profit.
8. Expect the end of the world.
9. Laugh. Be joyful though you have considered all the facts.
10. Ask yourself: will this satisfy a woman satisfied to bear a child?
11. As soon as the generals and politicians can predict the motions of your mind, lose it.
12. Leave it as a sign to mark the false trail, the way you didn't go.
13. Be like the fox who makes more tracks than necessary, some in the wrong direction.

(Excerpted from *The Mad Farmer Liberation Front Manifesto*)

That sounds like the kind of pledge of allegiance that should have meaning for us on the Fourth, or any day peer pressure causes us to put our hands over our hearts when we don't really want to, when we feel pressure to not take a knee during the Anthem.

This fine morning, under the apple tree, the three of us felt pretty good about kicking back, savoring the coffee and the cup of birdsong, the thought of those cherries waiting for us in an icy glass, dripping with the waters of condensation.

The dog is contented, too; he likes the company, and the thought of a new republic in which he plays a central role. On his back, he paws the air, stretching in pleasure, not caring to be anywhere else or anyone else.

**INSULIN** from page B1

the group treated 14-year-old Leonard Thompson, all 65 pounds of him. Four months later, a few doses were shipped to Rochester.

Havens received his first injection on May 22, 1922. There were setbacks and risks. The dose had to be increased. There was the potential for an allergic reaction or infections at the site of injection. At one point, the injections had become so painful that his doctor withheld the needle for a few days, fearing for his patient's life.

Those working in the field seemed to agree that an oral drug would be an improvement, and plant extracts were one possibility.

After these initial discoveries and before the war, Robert Noble, a few years out of medical school, began working with Collip. During the war they spent some time figuring out how best to traumatize laboratory animals – presumably to aid traumatized soldiers – by spinning them around in a drum. After the war they refocused on curing disease.

In 1952 Noble's older brother, a physician with an interest in diabetes, received a packet of rosy periwinkle leaves in the mail. They were sent by another physician working in Jamaica who had ties to Toronto, a Dr. Johnson. Locals there claimed that tea made with periwinkle leaves relieved the symptoms of diabetes, and Johnson was curious.

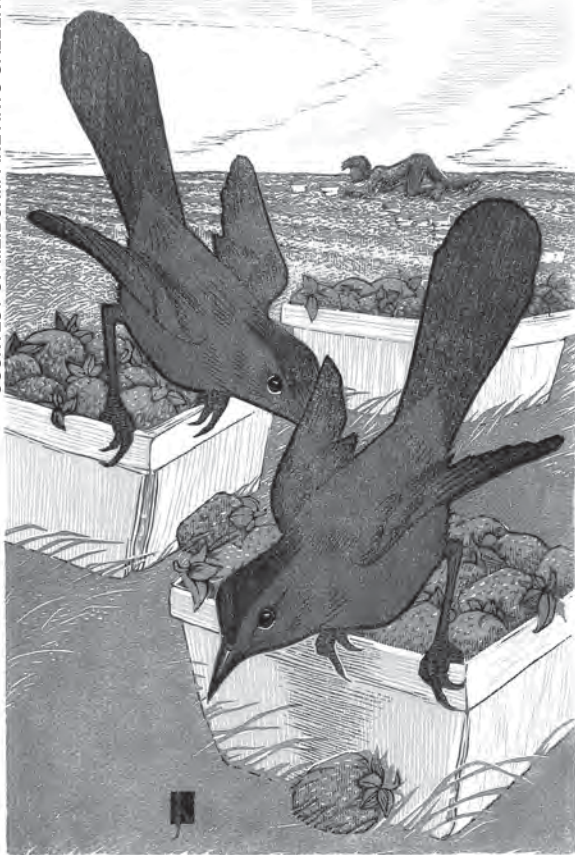
The older Noble passed the packet on to Collip's laboratory to see if they could find some active ingredient in those leaves. The lab, according to the younger Noble, had already been tinkering with plant extracts while following up on various folkloric connections.

When an extract of the leaves failed to calm the sugary blood of diabetic rats and rabbits, Noble and his colleagues tried an injection. That didn't work either, but there was a curious side effect. Rats exposed to large amounts of periwinkle extract died of infection. Something in the plant's leaves suppressed the immune response, and in particular, depressed the white blood cell count.

It was this observation, Noble later wrote, that eventually led to the anti-cancer drugs – in particular, antileukemic drugs. Plants and plant extracts have been used since forever; at the time, drugs isolated from plants had been in use for nearly a century, including morphine and quinine. This would be the first for cancer, where the need was so critical.

James Havens lived until 1960. In the years since his initial treatment, an oral treatment for diabetes has yet to emerge, although some plants and herbs are used to moderate the symptoms. In 1963 his grandson Ben was

COURTESY OF WEIBOHM FINE ARTS GALLERY



*Insult to Injury* - 5 1/2" x 7" - James D. Havens - Del. & Imp. 1967

"Insult to Injury," a woodcut by James D. Havens. James Havens, grandfather to Monosson's husband Ben Letcher, was the first American treated with insulin in the US.

born, and his family eventually became mine, too.

James Havens' prints and watercolors hang on our walls and in museums around the country: ripening blackberries in deep purples, reds, and green; a butter yellow sunflower standing against the blue sky; soft lily petals stretching across the page; stars that swirl into the night sky.

Plants may have failed to provide a better cure, but they fueled his artist's soul.

Emily Monosson lives in Montague Center and is an independent toxicologist and writer, a member of the Ronin Institute, and a part-time college instructor. She is the author of *Evolution in a Toxic World*, *Unnatural Selection*, and *Natural Defense: Enlisting Bugs and Germs to Save Our Food and Medicine*. She is currently working on a book about killer fungus. This article was reprinted with her permission from her blog at [www.toxicevolution.wordpress.com](http://www.toxicevolution.wordpress.com).

**HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE GILL POLICE LOG****Floating Opossum; Yoga Break; Sign Ignorers; Suspicion****Friday, 5/15**

9:35 p.m. Two kayakers caught in thunderstorm near French King Highway. Transported two people to Turners Falls.

**Saturday, 5/16**

9:29 a.m. A suspicious motor vehicle approached a juvenile walking near Upinngil last Tuesday and asked if she needed a ride.

12:33 p.m. Assisted Northfield PD with motor vehicle crash.

**Monday, 5/18**

4:34 p.m. Caller reported a male subject rappelling off cliff on French King Highway. Made contact.

**Tuesday, 5/19**

7:16 a.m. Caller from French King Highway requested a welfare check on a male subject who had been drinking.

8:37 a.m. Motor vehicle accident on the Turners Falls-Gill Bridge. Tractor trailer struck a bridge abutment, breaking a rear axle.

6:43 p.m. Assisted Northfield PD checking welfare of subject intoxicated and in river.

7:47 p.m. Officer requested on Chappell Drive. Peace restored.

**Wednesday, 5/20**

10:14 p.m. Caller from Boyle Road advised she received a scam call from someone claiming to be her grandson.

10 p.m. Report of a gunshot on Mountain Road, and dogs barking. Checked the area.

**Thursday, 5/21**

12:37 a.m. Caller from Chappell Drive called 911 for verbal disturbance.

2:37 p.m. Caller from North Cross Road reported a blue pickup in the middle of the road. Male subject seemed to be under the influence. Spoke with the operator safe to drive.

4:51 p.m. Oak Street caller would like to speak with officer about his neighbors working on their vehicles.

**Saturday, 5/23**

12:52 p.m. Caller from Main Road states their vehicle has a flat. Assisted with traffic.

3:09 p.m. Passerby reported two people climbing on the monument on the French King Bridge. Subjects gone on arrival.

5:39 p.m. Contact with three ATV/UTVs on high-tension line road. Advised of trespass laws.

**Monday, 5/25**

12:58 p.m. Caller from French King Highway states two motorcycles behind her were weaving and sticking their legs out, taunting her.

**Friday, 5/15**

1:25 p.m. Caller from

Barton Cove Road reported people using the grills and picnic area even though signs prohibit it.

3:43 p.m. Caller reported three people with kayaks on Barton's Cove Island where eagles nest. They are parked by the sign, so they know they should not be there. Environmental police advised.

7:34 p.m. Greenfield PD requested a welfare check on a child on French King Highway. Unable to locate.

**Tuesday, 5/26**  
6:26 p.m. Caller from state boat ramp reported that he saw a red pickup hit a trailer attached to a silver pickup, then leave.

**Wednesday, 5/27**  
11:01 a.m. Meals on Wheels driver requesting welfare check on Main Road.

3:28 p.m. Assisted Northfield PD with disturbance on Mount Hermon Station Road.

10:03 p.m. Assisted Erving PD with breaking and entering on Papermill Road.

**Thursday, 5/28**  
2:11 a.m. Caller from Main Road reported two vehicles being loud. Caller would like them moved on.

**Friday, 5/29**  
9:44 a.m. Caller reported a motorcycle on the French King Highway weaving in and out of traffic. Officer noted that the motorcycle just went by him, passed three vehicles, and went into Montague. Unable to locate.

5:23 p.m. Assisted Erving PD with crash on West Main Street.

**Saturday, 5/30**  
12:55 p.m. Caller from French King Highway asked for an officer because of vandalism.

4:18 p.m. Caller from Barton Cove Road reported a dead puppy in the water at Barton's Cove. Later determined to be a dead opossum.

**Sunday, 5/31**  
9:11 a.m. Caller on Center Road reports a dead deer in yard.

10:51 a.m. Assisted Erving PD serving a warrant on Gunn Street.

5:53 p.m. Officer on French King Highway requesting another unit for a fight. Determined to be a case of road rage that stopped when they saw the officer.

6:24 p.m. Caller on Main Road reported heavy black smoke from the chimney. Determined to be a malfunctioning burner.

**Monday, 6/1**  
11:27 p.m. Caller from Main Road states he lost his dog. Dog later

returned.

**Tuesday, 6/2**  
8:52 a.m. Tree down on River Road, blocking road. Highway department notified.

**Thursday, 6/4**  
3:26 p.m. Caller from French King Highway reported a debit card scam. Report taken.

8:07 p.m. Helped a citizen on Hoe Shop Road with employment paperwork.

**Friday, 6/5**  
12 p.m. Caller from South Cross Road advises he is out assisting his neighbor, looking for four loose cows.

3:49 p.m. Caller from Main Road reported a Craigslist rental scam.

6:24 p.m. Caller from West Gill Road requested an officer for five stray cows.

**Saturday, 6/6**  
3:39 p.m. Assisted Erving PD with missing person warrant.

7:40 p.m. Assisted Erving PD with trespass on Papermill Road.

**Sunday, 6/7**  
9:05 a.m. Caller from West Gill Road reported a trailer and lawnmower stolen.

**Monday, 6/8**  
11:28 a.m. Meals on Wheels volunteer requested welfare check for Main Road resident.

11:43 a.m. Possible rabid raccoon reported on West Gill Road.

**Wednesday, 6/10**  
7:15 p.m. Officer requested to keep the peace on West High Street.

**Thursday, 6/11**  
11:47 a.m. Caller reported subject *en route* to French King Bridge to commit suicide. Located elsewhere.

11:58 a.m. Tree down on Barney Hale Road. Power cut; highway department and power company notified.

**Friday, 6/12**  
12:45 a.m. Request for help with argument on Chappell Drive.

5:02 p.m. Conducted a welfare check on a bicyclist on the ground at Main Road and Mount Hermon Road. Was taking a yoga break.

7:28 p.m. Assisted Bernardston PD on Church Street.

**Sunday, 6/14**  
12:32 p.m. Assisted Montague PD with closing Turners Falls-Gill Bridge for protest.

2:06 p.m. Helped a delivery driver with a problem customer.

4:51 p.m. Caller reported a female party sitting in the middle of the French King Bridge. Determined to be all right.

9:02 p.m. Request from caller on Chappell Drive to keep the peace.

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BOOK REVIEW

**Amy Gordon, *Painting the Rainbow* (Holiday House, 2014)**

By CHARLOTTE RELYEA-STRAWN

**GILL** – Hi, I’m Charlotte Relyea-Strawn, and I’m 12 years old. Because of all this time at home and summer vacation coming on so fast, I have been reading a lot of books. Here’s one book that I thought was really great, and I recommend you read it, too!

The book is titled *Painting the Rainbow* by Amy Gordon, a local author who also lives near me.

*Painting the Rainbow* is told from two points of view, those of Holly and Ivy, who are close cousins. Holly and Ivy go to an annual summer reunion at their grandparents’ house, but this year it is different. It’s the summer of 1965, and the girls seem to be growing apart. Unrest has hit the family, due to some secrets that have been kept away for so many years.

One day, their grandpa takes the family’s rowboat out, which is old and has not been used in many

years. He tells the girls to use it once again, letting them paint it in any way they want. The cousins decide to paint it just like it used to be, bright and pretty like a rainbow.

Having the rowboat out and running again brings the cousins to wonder: What really happened all those years ago? Or the real question: What really happened to their Uncle Jess? The girls start finding letters and paintings dated back to World War II, written by Jess and a Japanese boy named Kiyo, leaving the girls wondering who this mysterious Kiyo is.

The story deals with fights, involving the whole family, and friends absorbed by the secret which makes them caught up in their own world, and not their own regular selves. But, while all this is going on, the cousins learn what their true passions really are. From sailing lessons taught by Will, a family friend, and the annual play at the end of the year, they learn not to be afraid of who they are.

The author, Amy Gordon, brings each page alive in this simple story of how a family battles with sadness and unrest. Gordon adds much more depth, letting the readers find the true meaning of the story. In the author’s note at the end of the book,

Gordon describes the Japanese student who the character Kiyoshi is based on. His name was Takano Mitsui and he went to Dartmouth College.

I was fortunate enough to have an interview with her on Tuesday, June 16. Below are some of our conversations that I recorded.

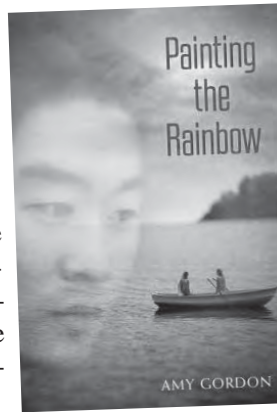
**Charlotte Relyea-Strawn: What inspired you to write this book?**

**Amy Gordon:** I started writing a while ago. This was the first book I ever wrote, and it was based on my own experience. It took me a while to find the theme for the girls. I kept putting it down and then adding more. The book was based on an older person in the family.

**CRS: Is the book based on any-**

*thing in real life?*

**AG:** Yes, it’s based on my own experience growing up at a lake house, this is why in the book it says for the path between the houses, because it’s based on two families. One having my cousins, and my father, and his brother. All of the characters in this book are imagined from different people I knew growing up.



**CRS: Have you always loved writing?**

**AG:** Yes, I kept diaries and journal entries. Some of the journal entries in the book were based off of mine. This book was my first attempt [at writing a book]. Probably when I was young, I published nine short books.

**CRS: In the book the girls take sailing lessons. Did you ever do sailing, and was it a big thing in your family?**

**AG:** Sailing lessons were a big thing. We would race each other for many summers, against cousins, in any kind of weather. I start-

ed at eight years old. In the book, Holly’s fear of sailing was like me. I was scared of sailing, but I came to enjoy it. At the age of 17 I taught sailing at a camp, and I got to understand sailing better.”

Lastly, I asked Gordon for advice on starting a book or story, and here is what she said: “Find what works for you. Some people like outlines, but be open minded. I don’t work that way, I like discovering as I go along. It’s the fun of not knowing. But most important, do homework around the characters, because the characters make the story come alive.”

So I say, don’t be afraid to write a book, because really, what could go wrong?

I’m so glad I got to interview Amy Gordon; it was an experience I have never had before. At school, I knew her as the director of the play program “ACT.” So, before I knew she wrote books, I knew she was a great play writer.

Other books you can read by her are *The Gorillas of Gill Park*, *Return to Gill Park*, *The Shadow Collector’s Apprentice*, and *Twenty Gold Falcons*.



**MONTV / MUSIK / MOUNTAIN**



**Part XXIII: Shrinnirs**

Interview by J. BURKETT

**TURNERS FALLS** – Some folks around this area have heard about or seen the Shrinnirs by now. They have played around here off and on since the 1990s at venues like Flywheel, Mystery Train, Looky Here, the Rendezvous, and the Root Cellar/10 Forward, and their history goes even further back than that, especially in Connecticut.

Not only have they been pushing forward with their musical vision for more than 30 years, but they have been active in many other aspects of the CT underground for even longer.

Joe runs the great Willimantic Records store, which is definitely worth stopping by if you are in the Nutmeg State – they just moved to the BLiSS Marketplace, and will be reopening in the next few weeks!

As Byron Coley writes in the liner notes in *Early Singles*, their last LP on Mystra Records:

“Formed in Willimantic, CT at the dag end of 1986. First as Eclectic Bitch, then the Bimbo Shrineheads, then Shrin, Willimantic Shrin, Shrinnirs, Lost Shrinnirs and surely more variations, Dawn Cook and Joe Malinowski (with

occasional fellow travelers) have created a politically-canted, theatrically-advanced, noise/folk combo inside a scene that wouldn’t assume the New Weird America mantle for almost two more decades.”

Dawn answered these questions, but Joe was involved with the answers, too. Check out their recordings and live shows, and expect the amazing and unexpected...

**MMM: Who are your major influences?**

**S:** The person who has had the biggest influence on me musically, is Joe. He really opened me up to all kinds of music and continues to expand my musical horizons. He also helped me develop an appreciation for music that I didn’t initially “get.”

Though I’d started listening to punk in high school, I was still performing folk music and protest songs back in the early ‘80s, and hadn’t yet ventured into the world of experimental music.

Another major influence was college radio. We had friends with great shows, playing all kinds of awesome music, which was really inspiring. Sad to hear those same college stations these days playing classic rock and pop.

**MMM: Do you have any favorite show memories, venues, tours?**

**S:** One of my favorite memories is our first tour: me, Joe, and Josh. I’m sure there were some bumps in the road, and I’m sure I was difficult at times, but one of the nice things about having a shitty memory is that I don’t remember any of that!

We camped in some beautiful state parks – Utah was gorgeous – and we played with some great bands in a lot of cool places. I also fondly remember the Populous Pudding in Willimantic, which had a lot of great fucking shows!

We played some awesome shows at the old UConn student union, the Middle East in Cambridge, MA (the night with Rebbly Sharp and The Ex downstairs!), the gig with Bikini Kill at Studio 158 – another great DIY space.

And there were some memorable shows at Charlie’s Basement, where we also did a live recording.

**MMM: How did you come up with the song “Separating your Face”? Were you driving?**

**S:** Yes, I was driving – but I can’t remember if I wrote it because I’d seen a bad accident and realized it’s just a six-inch double yellow line keeping cars from smashing into each other, or if I was driving to one of my two jobs and some shitty rich kid stepped in front of my car like he owned the street.

**MMM: Do you both still like Connecticut?**

**S:** Yeah, there’s some things I like about CT. We’re a blue state and our politicians, for the most part, are more progressive than many other states. We’ve got some beautiful state parks that are now all free for CT residents.

There’s Willimantic Records, of course, and cool spots in New Haven for music.

There’s things I don’t like: that we have one of the highest gaps between rich and poor, and that there’s not a lot of support for live, original music. Joe’s had so many awesome shows at the store, and very few people come out.

**MMM: Does it seem at all strange to have played together this long, when so much has changed in the world?**

**S:** Yes. It’s sometimes strange to look around at a show and realize you’re the oldest person there – I feel like a punk rock grandma. But it’s OK. It’s awesome to see there’s still an active DIY scene, and all kinds of great music and soundscapes being made.

Yes, in that so much has changed technologically, which has never been one of my strengths. I’m so old school I still listen to music by playing CDs, cassette tapes, and radio through my boom box, or vinyl on my record player!

And – yes, in that it’s the year 2020 – holy shit! Doesn’t seem that long ago when reaching 2000 was a big damn deal, I mean people were freaking out about Y2K. And now it’s fucking 2020 and things have changed for the worst, which I didn’t think possible back in the Reagan and Bush years.

But here we are with the pathological orange swamp monster tRump and his cult of greed, lies and fake news, ignorance and hatred: overt racism and rise of fascism, mass incarceration, mass extinction of animals, destruction of the environment and climate change, mass detention of refugees and immigrants – including children, which is just fucking inhumane, and a crime against humanity!

**MMM: Whoa. It’s really true, these are definitely scary times... I think of you both as my “activist friends.” Are you as active these days? Are there any causes you think people should be more involved in?**

**S:** I’ve been an activist for a long time, and have been protesting a lot lately! I was in New York City for the climate strike on September 20, and it was inspiring to see so many young people out on the streets. Climate change is something everyone should give a shit about and do something!

People need to confront/combate the scourge of racism/white nationalism that’s poisoning this country

and others. We need to fight the rise of fascism here and around the world. I’m also outraged over the mass detention and treatment of immigrants and we need to stop it and the fucking border wall.

On May Day, activists around the state had rolls of paper that looked like stockade fence, and we painted things like “No human is illegal” and surrounded the federal building that houses the ICE office and unfurled the rolls, basically building a wall around the building. When the speakers were done we symbolically tore down the wall, then took to the streets, and shut down Main Street and downtown Hartford for over an hour. It was awesome, but it didn’t change anything, so there’s still so much more to do.

We need to end mass incarceration and the prison industrial complex. Folks should give a damn and do something about the obscene wealth disparity in this country, and the fucking politicians bought out by corporate interests who don’t give a damn about working folks. There’s so much change needed for a more just and equitable world and it can seem hopeless, but we’ve got to act!

**MMM: Are there any particular messages you want to convey with the Shrinnirs these days? Authors you think should be read?**

**S:** I’d love for more people to know about and read Octavia Butler, one of the few black women science fiction authors. Check out *Parable of the Sower*, ironically “set in the 2020s where society has largely collapsed due to climate change, growing wealth inequality, and corporate greed” (Wikipedia).

I love Margaret Atwood. Check out the *MaddAddam* Trilogy, another dystopian story that is frighteningly relevant and prophetic.

**MMM: Any advice for musicians starting out?**

**S:** Just keep at it. Be who you are, say what you gotta say, and make your music. And it’s great when you connect with fellow musicians and kindred spirits – provide mutual support and inspiration.

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the  
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page

It is difficult  
to get the news from poems  
yet men die miserably every day  
for lack  
of what is found there.

- William Carlos Williams

edited by Christopher Sawyer-Lauçanno  
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# June Poetry Page

## A Crime That No One Can See

Sitting on a cold stone calling my name "Camilla Camilla where are you," my mother's voice rings in my ear from thousands of miles away, I keep walking, trudging, from dropped in nowhere

Bangladesh says no, with 1.2 million Rohingya refugees.  
Malaysia says no, with boats cramped with dozens, and they only die waiting.  
All I have left to wonder is if I will die waiting too.

Closer and closer to Niger we move  
where quarantine for fourteen days will trap us, who knows after that. I can't reach my mom and tell her "I'm fine", and steady her shaking hands.

I'm filled with anxiety,  
Hunger  
Thirst  
Weakness.

A crime, that's what people are doing. There is a total disrespect for any kind of humanitarian or legal framework,  
every night I kneel down and pray to God on my bruised knees, hoping some piece of faith will come trailing after me.

I hear glimpses of wishes we were stuck on the Bay of Bengal, waiting, hoping to be let in, because they say "Libya is a slow death." The punishing truth is you're an immigrant: you're never satisfied, you will die of starvation, sickness, or heartbreak.

My mom is gone.  
She died in the piercing depths of the sea, I'm left alone, no one left to love, no reason left to eat, a huge burden to place on a 10 year old's shoulders. When someone gives a sigh of agony and is left unnoticed, the truth stabs right through your heart.  
I have to make it for her.

Days only seem to get longer, skin and body dirtier, clothes torn and limited, but when I hear the words "we fear for these immigrants, we must protect them," instantaneous relief pours over me, the feeling of finding the needle in the haystack.  
Someone, someone, is looking out for me

- Charlotte Relyea-Strawn  
Gill

(With lines from Lori Hinnant and Isabel Debre,  
"Desert or Sea: Virus Traps Migrants in Mid-  
Route Danger Zone," *AP News*, May 3, 2020)

## Till Death Do Us Part

*This goes out to the most beautiful girl in the world.*

I don't know who you are or where you're from  
but I wanted to let you know that you're as beautiful as they come  
with those Brown eyes and those gorgeous red lips  
you remind me of the sun every time it starts to rise  
you shine through the darkest days  
every time I see that beautiful gaze  
I know this might seem silly but I want you  
to know that I don't know where you came from  
or where you are from  
just that you're as beautiful as they come  
that cute little voice always making jokes  
I can't wait till I can introduce you to my folks  
but before I do that I want to take your hand  
and walk across the beautiful beach along the sand  
enjoying your beautiful smile  
especially when you walk up the aisle  
and the preacher begins to talk  
I wanted to tell you that you'll always have my heart  
till death do us part my love.

- Luis Manuel Delgado  
Turners Falls

## The Amazon is Not For Sale

Silent screams  
Ignored.  
Whirring and crashing  
Hailed.  
Echoing  
Through the dying body  
Silently screaming.

Bamboo flutes  
Playing  
Nobody listening.  
Dancing for days  
Around the flaking bark.  
Touching  
What is close to being lost.

Painted bungalows  
With neatly tended gardens now live here  
The endless nothingness  
Millions of cattle dotting the horizon.  
When the sun comes up  
It no longer glistens off last night's rain  
That pooled on the huge leaves.  
Now it gets slurped into the parched grounds' mouth.

Ancient trunks next for the chop  
Have been daubed with paint.  
An empty logging truck arrives  
And leaves  
Brimming with greed.  
Now tire marks are rutted into the soil.

The storm is here.  
They fall  
As frequently as drops of rain.  
Thunder shakes the Earth Lighting strikes.  
Ignorant of the close future.  
The future In which what's here  
Won't be.  
Only some barren scrubland  
Wishing it had listened to their screams.

Isolated and fearful  
Of everything.  
Ground shaking  
Deafening noises  
Coming from every side.  
They are surrounded!  
Rooted to the ground in fear.  
No hope of escape.  
Only you can help them.  
Help them survive  
And thrive.

The same dream.  
So far from dancing and holding hands.  
The dream of cheap land.  
But what about the cost?  
The cost of ear plugging  
Of ripping open the seam  
of Life  
of Earth  
of Us.

All I know is one thing  
The Amazon Rainforest is not for sale.

- Lizzy Polatin  
Gill

(With lines from Matt Sandy and Sebastián Liste,  
"The Amazon Rainforest Is Nearly Gone. We Went to the  
Front Lines to See If It Could Be Saved," *Time*, September 12, 2019)

## Contributors' Notes

Lizzy Polatin and Charlotte Relyea-Strawn wrote their respective remarkable poems this spring when they were in the sixth grade at Gill Elementary. According to their teacher Isabel Koyama, their work began as responses to under-reported news stories posted on the Pulitzer Center Poetry Contest website. The Pulitzer Center asked students to consider how poetry can be an effective response to current events and under-reported stories. Both Lizzy and Charlotte certainly demonstrated the power of verse to penetrate the essence of the news. Both have submitted their poems to the contest. We wish them the very best, and are honored to publish these stunning poems here first.

Luis Manuel Delgado, 24 years old, lives in Turners Falls. Luis describes his work and life this way: "I love to write poetry. Most of my stuff is dark, due to having a not so pleasant past when I was a child, and poetry has always made it better. At first I did rap - my worst idea - but then someone showed me poetry, and it turned out I had a natural talent for it."

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# GREAT FALLS APPLE COLUMN

By RACHEL LABRIE

**TURNERS FALLS** – Greetings, *Montague Reporter* community, and Happy Solstice! It has been a wild ride since the first day of Spring, when crocus began emerging in the planters and the peepers were just beginning to sing their orchestra of croaks. Our community, both small and global, has been rocked to the core trying to navigate the layering crises and “new normals,” along with a social justice movement that is both heartbreaking and inspiring.

And on top of all that, it seems our village of Great Falls and surrounding area has somehow missed any sort of significant precipitation in almost ... seven weeks?! There is



Baby kohlrabi at the Unity Park Community Garden.

a lot going on these days, but in the midst of the chaos, Great Falls Apple Corps has progressed by leaps and bounds with several spring projects.

We have finally figured out the water situation at the Community Garden. Since the closest water source – aside from rainwater – is 300 feet away, we have had quite the struggle these past two years. Broken spigots, leaky hoses and faucets, a faulty rainwater catchment system, and more have made it very difficult to keep plants hydrated.

In early May we had the help of an expert carpenter and handyman to fix the holding tank’s faucet, the spigot on the fieldhouse building, and the rainwater catchment system. By dragging a hose across the parking lot, we can now fill the 100-gallon tank and have water available for our garden members. It’s been a life saver during this extremely dry season.

We created ten beds specifically for public picking, called U-Pick beds, that now have a very clear sign designating that the food in those beds is for the public. We currently have radish, kale, butter crunch lettuce, chamomile, and of course strawberries available in our U-Pick beds – so come and pick!

We were also gifted a beautiful handmade wooden sign and window box for the blue shed, and began planting an edible hedge

between the garden and the skate park. In addition to the Community Garden, we were gifted the yard at the old Saint Andrews church at Seventh and L streets (we call it the “Church Lot”) to plant an “Edible Forest Garden.” Last fall we planted over 20 native edible and/or medicinal plants, and this year we have added a few more, including a massive blueberry and a grape vine.

We now have a partnership with a group of teenagers from the Brick House who have recently started helping us with watering, weeding, and tending beds at both sites. This kind of partnership is the community building we have been dreaming of since we first started planning things back in 2017, and we are so grateful for the Brick House and the young adults who are helping us keep all our thirsty plants watered.

The summer Solstice is always a magical time of year, even in this dry, hot weather. The catalpa trees, one of my absolute favorite trees, are in full bloom along with the wild rose and elderflowers. At Unity Park beyond the Community Gardens there are multiple juneberry trees ripe with little round berries ready for the picking. (Check them out, by the skate park and the rain garden.)

In addition to the local juneberries there are many mulberries around that are also overloaded with delicious fruit. Not to mention that



Catmint growing in the U-Pick flower bed at the Unity Park Community Garden.

we discovered a huge sweet cherry tree at our Church Lot, covered in the most delicious cherries!

Yes indeed, free wild fruit is abounding this time of year, even when times are tough. What could feel better during these times of uncertainty than to just go for a nice walk around town and pick yourself a basket full of fruit?

Also, don’t forget to check out

our two downtown planters in front of Ed’s Barber Shop. The planter closest to the intersection is a permaculture-inspired bed with many edible perennials and medicinals.

Stay tuned for future events – it is possible by late summer or early fall that we will have our annual Pickling in the Park, but for now we will pray for rain and keep tending the U-Pick beds. Happy Summer!

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